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Out of Place

The Negotiation of Space in Site-Specific Performance

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Abstract

Theatre has a long history of experimentation with a variety of spatial configurations and relationships, but it is only in the last two decades that the label 'site-specific' has been applied to theatrical performance, denoting a new mode of place-bound practice. The term, emerging from the visual arts of the 1960s, has come to suggest performance occurring beyond the theatre building and foregrounding its chosen site as instrumental in the development of form or theme.

Located at the intersection of performance scholarship and theoretical explorations of place, the thesis examines the means by which a performative engagement with place and space is created and understood. This examination is concerned with finding and testing critical tactics in direct response to the methodological strategies of performance makers. It therefore engages with a number of both scholarly and less stable modes of performing place in order to stage an epistemological enquiry into the kinds of knowledge that site-specificity produces and requires. These modes include cultural theory (and particularly de Certeau's pedestrian tactics), touristic practices, archaeology, travel writing and literary fiction.

Part One of the thesis seeks to orientate the reader within these fields and debates by means of two contrasting rhetorical figures: the map and the excursion. These figures serve to initiate a dialogue between theorizing space and documenting practice, informing the closer analytical readings of the second part of the thesis. Part Two is structured via a metaphor of exploration, whereby the four concepts of rules, memory, rhythm and hybridity are proposed as analytical manoeuvres through which the complex relationships between place and performance can be illuminated.

Finally, it is argued that the process of negotiation – between performance, audience and place, and between site-specificity and 'theatreness' – is doubly significant as both the discursive methodology of the thesis and the explorative strategy of the site-specific theatre practitioner.

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Introduction: Site(s) and Specificity

*Find a place where you can see good stretches of horizon. Take a deep breath and gently breathe out blowing the air along the line where everything else meets the sky. It's surprisingly relaxing.
(Wrights & Sites, An Exeter Mis-Guide)*

Terms and Contexts

Imagine a theatre practice that begins with a journey: encountering new spaces for itself and treading lightly or firmly in those sites as a means of testing, subverting or renewing their spatiality and its own 'theatreness'. Or consider, rather, the practice that embarks on its journey not so much in a sense of exploration as escape: defining itself always in opposition to that space it has left. Perhaps, instead, we might imagine a theatre that does not wish to travel (even to the theatre building), beginning rather from the space it already inhabits and enjoying its 'everydayness'.

Though theatre-makers and audiences have been imagining (and creating) such practices for centuries, it was not until the 1980s that the term 'site-specific', already well established in the visual arts,¹ was first consistently applied to a growing body of theatre practices in Britain. Since then, it has most often been to the practices themselves that commentators and makers turn in order to define and redefine the nature of fluid and provisional site-specificities, delineating the concerns of such work through questions of, for example, political efficacy, spatial identity, urban rhetorics and 'the everyday'. Working in, across and between these fields of meaning-making, site-specific performance, it seems, might be many different things: devised; scripted; promenade; static; outdoor; indoor; experimental; mainstream. A variety of manifestations of site-specific performance is collected under the one heading, along with a variety of reasons for, and aims of, the work.

Faced recently with the task of articulating something approaching a definition of site-specific performance, I offered the following: performance occurring in non-theatre venues and in which the site is a vital element, instrumental in developing the theme

or form of the work.² This might serve here as a working definition, a shared starting point in a complex web of terminology, pointing to the foregrounding of spatiality as a locus of performance meanings. What it cannot hint at, however, is the potential for movement, for transience or for playfulness that we find explored in a variety of site-specific agendas. In attempting to be straightforward, this definition risks implying fixity. By way of developing an understanding of the shifting spatial frames that frequently characterize site-specific theatre, I want to begin by taking a step back from this performance category to consider briefly its constituent terms. What do we mean by 'site'? And how, in this context, is 'specificity' to be conceived of?

Site is not simply equated with place or space. This is apparent in such claims as Kevin Hetherington's that "certain *spaces* act as *sites* for the performance of identity" (1998: 105) or that of the editors of an edition of the *New Formations* journal entitled *Sexual Geographies* that "sexuality in the city figures as a major *site* of cultural disturbance" (Mort & Nead 1999; my emphasis). Prominent cultural theorist Michel de Certeau has suggestively argued for the means by which *place* becomes *space* (discussed below), but he doesn't address what might be needed for either of these to become *site*. It seems important, then, to ask how site relates to other, ostensibly similar, terms: place; space; location; environment. We should note that 'site' is both noun and verb and that it therefore, when applied to a particular location, seems to imply that something (human, architectural, conceptual) has been *sited* there. But is 'site' one neat, bounded place, or can it involve a number of different, and differently related, spaces? In the context of contemporary office work, Paul du Gay has argued that "meaning-making processes operating in any one site are always partially dependent upon the meaning-making processes and practices operating in other sites for their effect" (1997: 10), an idea that we might develop in order to suggest that, through the ways in which we already interact with questions of space in our everyday lives, 'site' always implies a network of spaces or locations. This, too, invites further questions. Is site always architecturally and geographically defined, or might it focus rather on the people who inhabit and visit it? Who constructs the site of site-specificity: the performance makers, the spectators, or other forces (town councils, perhaps, or developers, or site owners)? Can it be understood metaphorically as well as physically, encompassing both the 'real' and 'virtual' spaces to which Nick Kaye

refers (2000: 183)? Might it, similarly, articulate Marc Augé's 'non-place' (1995), even as it seems rooted in anthropological space?

The term 'specific', too, is less stable than it might first appear. Can the specific allow for ambiguity and multiplicity, meanings (plural) rather than meaning (singular)? Which aspects of performance are 'specific' to which aspects of site? And could we understand many other theatre practices to be specific to the form of auditorium that they inhabit?

This last question introduces an area of enquiry that informs much of the study that follows: the relationship between site-specific performance and a concept of the theatre or, perhaps, 'theatreness'. For, just as "every time an actor performs, he or she implicitly enacts a "theory" of acting" (Zarrilli 1995: 4), so every performance event mobilizes (either implicitly or explicitly) a particular version of the relationship between performance, space, and the physical and cultural context of these. Arenas staging implicit forms of this mobilization include the proscenium theatre, whose architectural division of space, together with the social resonance of each part of the space, suggests a system of appropriateness of different types of space for different parts of the performance process. For an audience seated in a room separated from the stage by the wall containing the proscenium arch, much of the process of performance remains hidden; similarly, other parts of the process of attending (buying tickets, meeting friends before the performance, consuming interval drinks) are kept apart in spatial terms from the actual business of watching the performance. Richard Schechner (1988: 161-4) elaborates further on this, as does Marvin Carlson, whose semiotic analysis of theatre buildings centres on the argument that "the entire theatre, its audience arrangements, its other public spaces, its physical appearance, even its location within a city, are all important elements of the process by which an audience makes meaning of its experience" (1989: 2). While the impact of the proscenium theatre space on the performance experience has been the basis of such analysis, the effects of this relationship tend to remain implicit at the level of performance: Nicholas Hytner's *Henry V*,³ for example, is not *about* the spatial identity of the National Theatre (though it might productively be read in that way). Conversely, site-specific performance is explicit in the way it communicates its version of the

performance/space relationship, usually foregrounding the relationship itself as a focal point of the event.

For Richard Schechner, the relationship between performance, the physical space it inhabits and the wider cultural spaces within which it is understood might be imagined through the notion of the map. His suggestion that “theater places are maps of the cultures where they exist” (1988: 161) is a significant one in the context of the present study, though it requires a more dynamic concept of cartographic processes than that encapsulated in, for example, the Ordnance Survey model. The types of site theatre has chosen and the socio-historic and cultural conditions influencing, and influenced by, this choice are many (see, for example, Wiles 2003); even a cursory glance through this history in the West would take in the ancient Greek amphitheatres, the churches and market places chosen by medieval liturgical drama and mystery plays respectively, Elizabethan organizations of stage and audience space, the proscenium, and the late-twentieth-century black box.

Just as in many other aspects of performance, we need to be aware here that there are varying levels of spatial engagement operating across a wide range of theatrical practices and, as always, the boundaries between these levels are blurred. If theatre is essentially a spatial medium (McAuley 1999; Mackintosh 1993), how then are we to make particular claims about that group of practices referred to as ‘site-specific’? Una Chaudhuri, in arguing for a ‘geography’ rather than a ‘history’ of performance, has suggested that an obsession with issues of place and space is perhaps the major trope of modern drama (1995). Baz Kershaw (1999) has argued for a move away from the theatre building in the search for performance practices that might be a source of the radical. And since Marvin Carlson cogently argued for the semiotic importance of the theatre space in *any* performance, it should be suggested that an analysis of Shakespeare in Regent’s Park, for example, would have something to say about the use of its spatial context and the ways in which this impacts upon our understanding of theatre practices. It seems necessary, then, to articulate where this thesis draws the boundaries of what site-specific performance *is*, or might be. Clearly, the practices in which I am interested here are not simply those that do not take place within a conventional theatre space and arrangement. My focus, rather, is those instances where an engagement with its location is fundamental to the

performance itself – to its creation and to its reception – though any definition of such an engagement is, as we have seen, in flux. At points, however, I am also interested in using the ideas of the thesis, developed in relation to site-specific practices, to respond in place-based terms to performances that do not use the site-specific label (one example being the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*, discussed in Chapter Four).

In attempting to make some kind of claim within this array of spatio-theatrical coordinates, any discussion of performance and site-specificity sets itself up in opposition to an implicit other. What must be acknowledged, as with any strategic use of an ‘other’, is the multi-faceted nature of this apparent opposite of site-specific practices. But how are we to define this ‘other’? ‘Non-site-specific’ soon becomes an unwieldy description, ‘building-based’ actually includes some site-specific theatre and excludes many performances that still do not fit this label, and the ‘traditional theatre’ is useful as an opposite term only in some circumstances. Moreover, in many cases it is less interesting to consider the relationship between site-specificity and the implicit other against which it is defined (perhaps a ‘meta-theatre’ or idea of ‘theatreness’) in terms of opposition than as a set of continuing negotiations. This is one sense in which the concept of negotiation (to which I shall return) is marked as significant here.

To a large extent, then, this thesis springs from a desire to investigate an intriguing tension that seems to be played out through much site-specific performance: between, on the one hand, the signalling of the work as significantly different to theatre-based practices and, on the other, its continuing engagement with many of the codes by which those practices are understood. A similarly prominent desire underpinning the thesis is to assert the usefulness of reading site-specific works through parallel enquiries in other disciplines. Cultural theory and urban studies, geography, architecture, anthropology, archaeology and travel literature have all, with their own emphases, developed theories and methodologies for approaching questions of spatiality in its various cultural, social, political and historical contexts. One trajectory of this study, then, is to propose site-specific performance as a major means by which the theatre has sought to grapple with the issues of spatiality that have been preoccupying scholars and practitioners from other fields in recent times. I want also to suggest that we might look to the tools used and questions asked in some of these

other fields in order to begin to formulate interpretative strategies for site-specific performance. The methodology of the present study derives from two linked desires: to investigate both the 'theatreness' and the spatial dynamics of site-specific performance. As such, its approach is necessarily interdisciplinary, drawing aspects of theatre and performance studies together with discursive and analytical models from a variety of spatial disciplines. Implied in such an approach is the belief that performance is best understood not as a discrete, bounded activity but as one means in a socio-cultural network of many by which behaviours and ideas, actions and relationships are tested, subverted, adapted, critiqued and discussed.

Histories and genealogies: tracing site specifics

Here, and certainly not for the last time in this study, I find it necessary to deal in tentative plurals: *histories*, *genealogies*. I recognize the urge to look back, to ask what critical discourses and models of practice have fed into those contemporary theatre works that I or their creators want to label 'site-specific'. I want to *situate* these diverse practices, discussing them in terms of influences and legacies (those plurals again). At the same time, it should be clear that I am not positing a linear narrative trajectory in the story of site-specific performance; rather, I am pointing to a set of forms and ideas that in different ways have a resonance for the ways in which we might think about site-specificity and its development.

It seems much simpler in the visual arts. Miwon Kwon, documenting a genealogy (singular) of site-specificity, charts the development from the "grounded" site-specificity that grew out of minimalism in the late 1960s (articulated as a reversal of the "modernist paradigm" of autonomy (2002: 11)), through a variety of forms of "institutional critique" operating in the work (13), to the contemporary mobilization or "unhinging" of "site-oriented art" (30-1). She suggests that, whereas the 'site' of art contexts was once a discrete and bordered place, it is now more likely to be an itinerary than a map, "a fragmentary sequence of events and actions *through* spaces, that is, a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist" (2000: 46). Kwon makes it clear, however, that the nomadic nature of much contemporary work is not a return to the "placelessness" of modernism, and that she would want to assert a position somewhere *between* nomadism and the total emphasis

on the local: not simply “one place after another”, but a “relational sensibility” that takes account of the interaction of these experiences. What is exciting about this formulation is the proposition of plurality it offers to those creating or analysing site-specific theatre practices: the promise that the site of performance has the capacity to operate between places.

Nick Kaye, too, identifies in 1960s minimalism the origins of site-specificity, and he also believes in a “transitive definition of site” (2000: 183). “Minimalism’s site-specificity”, he suggests, “can be said to begin in sculpture, yet reveal itself in performance” (3); in sculpture that calls attention to the white cube space in which it is experienced, what is performed is the reception of the artwork, the viewer’s shifting awareness of his or her relationship to the work and the space in which it is sited. Kaye uses the debates generated in the 1960s to move to a consideration of a range of theatrical practices (including those of the British companies Forced Entertainment, Brith Gof and Station House Opera). The trajectories marked by Kwon and Kaye seem to be reinforced by Erica Suderburg, who writes that

as discursive terminology, *site-specific* is solely and precisely rooted within Western Euro-American modernism, born, as it were, lodged between modernist notions of liberal progressiveness and radical tropes both formal and conceptual. It is the recognition on the part of minimalist and earthworks artists of the 1960s and 1970s that “site” in and of itself is part of the experience of the work of art.

(2000: 4)

Suderburg, however, includes alongside her discussion of the site-specific a timeline of “sites/texts/monuments” that begins more than 2000 years BC with the Great Sphinx and Stonehenge, moving through six pages (and including, for example, the Eiffel Tower along with works by Marcel Duchamp and John Cage) before it arrives at the 1960s. The implication, at least, is that ideas associated with site-specificity might usefully be applied retrospectively to gain a new perspective on a variety of works and events. The list is explained with reference to installation art, which, it is suggested,

is informed by a multitude of activities, including *architecture douce* (soft architecture), set design, the Zen garden, happenings, bricolage, *son et lumière*, spectacles, world’s fairs, vernacular architecture, multimedia projections, urban gardens, shrines, land art, earthworks, trade show,

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century panoramas, Art Povera, follies, and the visionary environments of “folk” artists.

(2)

In the context of site-specific performance (rather than site-specific *art*), a similarly wide-ranging and evocative list can be constructed, recognizing that many practitioners working with this label (see Chapter Two) have developed their own contributions to site-specificity by drawing on practices other than minimalist sculpture. One line of development might be traced from the artistic experiments of Dadaism at the beginning of the twentieth century, through Situationist techniques such as the *derive* (discussed in Kaye: 117-8), the Happenings (see Kirby 1966) that became a popular mode of expression in the 1960s in both the USA and Europe, to the experimental zeal and political anti-establishment drive that exists behind some of today’s site-specific theatre. The common thread here is the political decision to move outside of the confines of designated artistic spaces (theatre buildings; galleries) and to make interventions into the realm of the everyday. In the first manifesto of his Theatre of Cruelty (published in Paris in 1938), Artaud expressed a similar desire to abandon the architecture of the traditional theatre building, calling for a “new concept of space” in the theatre, in which “the type and lay-out of the auditorium itself governs the show” (1993: 83; 76). These ideas influenced the environmental theatre of the 1960s and 1970s (Schechner 1994), a key precedent of site-specific theatre. Una Chaudhuri notes just such a narrative:

The experimentation that began with dadaism, continued with Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty and Brecht’s epic theater, and eventually exploded into myriad forms known variously as happenings, environmental theater, performance art, and, finally, site-specific theater, is a history of practical engagements with the problematic of plays and place.

(1995: 22)

Again, though, there is a danger here of linearity, of simply replacing the minimalist trajectory of visual arts with a ready-made model for site-specific theatre. Site-specific performances, we should note, have received formal, stylistic, ideological and conceptual legacies from sources that do not feature in either of the narratives described above. Questions of space and place are addressed in a number of theatrical and non-theatrical modes that feed in different ways into the current variety of site-specific practices.

Medieval mystery plays, for example, recognized the significance of everyday spaces and their contribution to the creation of vernacular meanings long before the urban studies of the late twentieth century developed its theorization of the everyday. These cycles, intimately interwoven with their towns of origin (perhaps the most famous examples being York and Chester), were reinvented in the 1950s, initially as part of the 1951 Festival of Britain. It is not irrelevant here that their subsequent development has been aligned with that of the community play (Marshall 1994: 292-3), given this latter form's emphasis on locational meanings and their social implications.

Other historical uses of non-theatre locations point to different priorities and theatrical allegiances. Street theatre, in its many guises (see Mason 1992), might include the mystery plays of medieval times, but also seems an appropriate term for thinking about, for example, those "scenes from the novels of Dickens" that, as recorded by Peter Ackroyd, "were played out on open carts on the very sites where those scenes were set" at the beginning of the twentieth century (Dickens, Ackroyd adds, "may have appreciated such a gesture, since he turned London itself into a vast symbolic theatre" (2000: 157)). Here, in the congruent mapping of story onto site, we find an example of the "quest for verisimilitude" that Marvin Carlson links to romantic theory and to a particular version of site-specificity in historical drama (1989: 27-8). From this point, we might make connections in one direction with the romanticism of Max Reinhardt's spectacular open-air performances in Berlin and Salzburg in the early decades of the twentieth century, but a different turn might bring us instead to consider how notions of *political* verisimilitude are played out in agit-prop, whose form and content are intrinsically connected with the places in which it is performed (Cohen-Cruz 1998).

Equally influential in developing a number of site-specific aesthetics has been the experimentation with non-theatrical traditions of performance (see, for example, the work of Welfare State,⁴ founded in 1968 – one of the first groups to use these alternative performance forms and to label its work 'site-specific'). Pageants, firework displays, tourist events, community celebrations, *son et lumière*, political demonstrations, military parades, street carnivals – each of these constructs a

particular set of relationships between performance, space and participants/spectators, working across a range of social and political associations.

It is precisely this multiplicity of discourses and models available to the site-specific practitioner that has fuelled some of the most interesting debates surrounding the work, leading not only to productive tensions between types of performance but also to the continued rethinking, in practice and theory, of what it might mean to be 'site-specific'. For me, this means that I have not sought in the examples drawn upon in this project to represent some kind of (imaginary) 'norm' of site-specific performance, but rather to respond in theoretical terms to the implications of the range of such performance.

Critical sources

Given both the vast range of influences for the work addressed and the desire of the thesis, expressed above, to draw ideas from other spatial disciplines into dialogue with theatre and performance studies, a discussion of critical sources has the potential to become a dissertation in its own right. So, while other figures will enter the thesis at different points in its journey, I propose here to introduce those fields, and the prominent works within them, that jointly create a starting point for the investigation that follows. I should note that, because Chapter Six involves something of a shift into spectatorship theory, I have included within the chapter itself a concise review of the literature in that field.

We have already seen that visual art (and particularly sculpture and installation) is the source of the very term 'site-specific' and, as such, has contributed a valuable set of theoretical discourses regarding its analysis. The most coherent framework for site-specific art is offered by Miwon Kwon in her recent *One Place After Another* (2002), which often prefers the term 'site-oriented' as a means of understanding the shifts that have occurred in arts practices of the last thirty years. Kwon's focus on the relationship between such work and the problematic concept of 'community' is especially instructive as a means of thinking about the effects produced by site-specificity (and, though outside the field of the present thesis, her analysis of four models of community ("community of mythic unity", sited communities, and both

temporary and ongoing “invented communities” (118-37)) seems to offer a potential way forward for the study of community theatre). Intersecting with parts of this debate, Malcolm Miles’s *Art, Space and the City* (1997) usefully considers the social implications of public art in urban contexts, reading the effects of monuments and ‘anti-monuments’, art on the underground, in hospitals and public squares through the frame of modernist and postmodernist takes on the city. A much wider, and often looser, understanding of site and ‘sitedness’ is represented by the articles in Erika Suderburg’s edited collection *Space, Site, Intervention* (2000), which deal variously with questions of identity politics, subjectivity and autobiography, processes of collection, the body and strategies of resistance. As the book is not organized according to any clearly articulated guiding principles, and as many of the articles focus on issues other than the precisely spatial dynamics of their case studies, Suderburg’s volume does not make the sort of sustained critique of place and art that Kwon⁵ and Miles are able to construct. What it does offer, however, is a diverse set of sometimes fascinating essays (many by artists, curators and writers as well as academics), whose collectively broad range points to the complex processes of locating and displacement that installation art might perform. In particular, I am interested in the series of shifts that *Space, Site, Intervention* performs between very different articulations of ‘site’ – psychic space; the mobile site; landscape; film space; the “space of electronic time” – that, because of the separate authorship of the essays, are never quite resolved. This concern with shifting, overlapping and contradictory understandings of site underpins much of the discussion in the central chapters of the present thesis.

Nick Kaye’s *Site-Specific Art* (2000), still the only book-length work concentrating entirely on site-specificity and performance, works in many ways to bridge some conceptual gaps between performance and the visual arts. Kaye develops the legacy of 1960s minimalism in part by pursuing its implications for the viewer of the work, but also by bringing it into dialogue with the architectural theory of Bernard Tschumi. Finally, though, Kaye’s inclusion of five experiments in performance documentation (by the practitioners themselves) leads him to assert the role of documentation in both enhancing and problematizing the spatial relationships that site-specificity enacts. This emphasis on documentation is taken further by Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks in their joint proposition for a ‘blurred genre’ between their two disciplines,

Theatre/Archaeology (2001). The focus here is not solely on site-specific performance, though Pearson's background in and continuing experiments with this mode (see Chapter Four for an analysis of one of his works) inform many of the connections made here between the creative and analytical approaches of archaeology and performance. Advocating a position of "critical romanticism" (132), influenced particularly by the ideas of Walter Benjamin and John Berger, the authors not only suggest and record but also, significantly, test out a number of means of documenting both the performance event and the locally-bound past. A similar sense of the problems and possibilities of the document is discussed by Clifford McLucas (who has collaborated with both Pearson and Shanks) in my interview with him, parts of which appear here in Chapter Two. Aside from the theoretical questions raised by the documentation of site-specific performance, however, it is vital that experiments in recording and responding to the work in printed media are taking place, not least because this invites us to rethink questions of where and how the work is located. Here I want to mention both the Exeter-based collective Wrights & Sites's account of its 1998 project on Exeter Quayside (*Site-Specific: The Quay Thing Documented* (2000)), which I have drawn upon a number of times for its considered reflections on the processes of making site-specific performance, and the useful resource provided by the London-based organization Artangel in the documentation of a decade of its commissions for 'unusual locations' (*Off Limits: 40 Artangel Projects* (2002)).

While not concerned with site-specificity, a number of other studies in the discipline of theatre have dealt with issues of space and place in ways that are instructive for the present thesis. In the case of Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* (first published in 1968), it is perhaps more accurate to say that it is instructive precisely in *not* dealing with the issues of space and place that are so tantalizingly suggested by its title and opening premise (see Chapter One, below). Marvin Carlson's *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture*, on the other hand, takes seriously the "more neglected aspects of the physical surroundings of performance" (1989: 2), elucidating the myriad performative effects of all manner of theatre venues. Taking a rather different interest in spatiality, Richard Schechner's *Environmental Theater* (first published in 1973) includes a chapter on 'space', in which the 'environment' of environmental theatre is characterized variously as "whole", "living", "evolving" and, crucially, "communal" (shared by a – frequently enforced – 'community' of

performers and spectators). The 1994 edition of this volume contains a document first written in 1967,⁶ in which Schechner posits two different notions of space in environmental theatre, both of which he sets up in opposition to the “orthodox theater”: “in the first case one *creates* an environment by transforming a space; in the second case, one *negotiates* with an environment, engaging in a scenic dialog with a space” (1994: xxx). Most of Schechner’s discussion of his experiments with environmental theatre focuses on the former notion, but it is the latter that seems most clearly to anticipate site-specific concerns. Though the relationship between theatre and ‘found space’ imagined here by Schechner is rooted in the terms and organizing principles of scenography, his awareness of the importance of negotiation in creating this relationship paves the way for the conclusions that I want to make (Chapter Seven).

Una Chaudhuri voices concerns about the ideology of resourcism that she finds embedded in environmental theatre (1995: 25), and her *Staging Place: the Geography of Modern Drama* makes a call for a more subtly drawn geography of theatre “capable of replacing – or at least significantly supplementing – its familiar ‘history’” (xi). While Schechner’s environments are the physical places in which performance locates itself and where the spectators sit or stand as they engage with the performance, Chaudhuri’s are the spaces *within* dramatic works, the represented locational struggles and desires of twentieth century plays. Arguing that a “complex engagement with the significance, determinations, and potentialities of place courses through the body of modern drama” (3), Chaudhuri uses the neologism ‘geopathology’ in order to foreground an image of place as a set of problems that theatre constantly rehearses and works through.

Staging Place is, itself, located firmly within theatre scholarship rather than the more recently emerging field of performance studies (see Striff 2003: 1-7 for a concise critical history), but elements of both fields contribute usefully to my means of engaging with site-specific works. Amongst other important ideas – a focus on process rather than product (performance as simultaneously a “doing and a thing done” (Diamond 1996: 1)); the creation of meanings only in relation to other cultural contexts; a self-reflexivity in the position of the scholar or analyst – performance studies makes us aware of the multiple implications of the verb ‘to perform’

(Schechner 2002; Carlson 1996). In doing so, it allows us to imagine a number of practices as constituting a performance of place: these include tourism and other conditions of travel, pedestrian movement, local, national and international politics, cartography, and site-specific performance itself. One forum for the continued animation of such ideas is *Performance Research*, the journal for the Welsh-based Centre for Performance Research. In recent years, particularly relevant editions have included *On Tourism* (summer 1997), *On Place* (summer 1998) and the three editions of Volume 6 (2001): *Departures*, *On Maps and Mapping*, and *Navigations*.

Turning to works outside of arts disciplines, I have referred many times in the present study to ideas proposed in Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). A cultural theorist who takes as his primary focus the creative role of the user (of texts and of places), de Certeau delineates a number of concepts that offer routes in to theorizing spatial practices. One of these is the much-cited distinction between 'place' and 'space':

A place is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. ... It implies an indication of stability. A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it.

(117)

De Certeau bases his sense of the difference between the two on the play between notions of stillness and movement, fixity and articulation. His suggestion that "the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers" enables us to investigate the action of 'spatializing' place and the new, located readings it might invite.⁷ We can imagine performance, like de Certeau's stories, as carrying out "a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" and organizes the "play of changing relationships between places and spaces" (118).

A second, related, model that I have drawn upon in the thesis concerns the relationship between 'strategies' and 'tactics'. In developing this model out of his more general notion of 'trajectory', de Certeau contrasts the 'strategies' exercised by

the controllers of places with the ‘tactics’ by which a user operates within these spaces. These tactics, given that they always occur in “the space of the other” (37), suggest a practice of ‘making do’. Their use reveals spaces of surprise and playfulness, plurality and creativity within otherwise ordered places. Both strategies and tactics constitute a form of knowledge or, rather, a *way of knowing*, and this, I think, is a more productive understanding of them as critical ideas than as necessarily and invariably tied to particular groups of people, fixing their relationship to space. In other words, the spatial practice of the performance-maker or the spectator, along with the critical practice of the analyst, would seem often to be developed through strategies *and* tactics, and through the tension between the two.

Other ideas that de Certeau lends to the analysis of site-specificity include his notion of ‘spatial stories’ (stories that “traverse and organize places” (115)), a sense of the importance of the role of the pedestrian in creating meanings out of place by his or her movement choices, and the seductive idea that places are haunted by memory and that only such places are inhabitable. It is in this last point that de Certeau’s work intersects with Gaston Bachelard’s evocative argument for *The Poetics of Space* (first published in France in 1958). “All really inhabited space”, Bachelard finds, “bears the essence of the notion of home” (1994: 5), and he proposes that, because human beings are inextricably attached to the images of the house, the human imagination ‘fills in the gaps’ of other places based on these images.

Raymond Williams joins us at different points in a variety of guises: through his ideas of performance signals of time and place (*Culture* (1981)), his influential socio-political and historical tracings of what he has termed *Keywords* (1983), and his discussion of the ways in which literature constructs rural and urban landscapes and communities (*The Country and the City* (1975)).

Williams’s analysis of the ‘structure of feeling’ articulated through historical questions of landscape is taken up and extended (partly by using Williams’s ideas in conjunction with phenomenological approaches) by Barbara Bender in her 1998 archaeological and anthropological study, *Stonehenge*. I have found this book particularly valuable in its astute and enthusiastic critique of the relationships and tensions between the multiple discourses generated in and around “one small (albeit

heavily symbolic) corner of the English landscape” (98), and I have engaged with these notions of multiplicity (though in relation to a less contested space) in Chapter Three. I would note, too, that Bender’s concerns link in many ways with those of Pearson and Shanks (2001): as well as the shared disciplinary interest in expanding the boundaries of archaeological theory, both texts combine a range of ‘ways of telling’ historical and spatial trajectories. For Bender, though, this is in part a rhetorical device contributing to a polemic against the ‘heritage industry’, while Pearson and Shanks’s more subtle exploration of the pleasures and dilemmas of heritage have been more useful to my wider proposals concerning the negotiation of space.

One significant development that paves the way for any contemporary analysis of our interconnectedness with space and place is the emergence of reconfigured place-related disciplines such as ‘cultural geography’ and, more recently, ‘urban studies’. These are the result of geography’s various attempts to redefine itself in the mid-1970s, when Relph argued that much of the preceding environmental discussion in the field was unsatisfactory because it failed to deal with the “subtlety and significance of everyday experience” and the “variety of ways in which places are experienced” (Relph 1976: preface). Roughly contemporary with Relph’s thinking are works such as Yi-Fu Tuan’s *Topophilia* (1974; a discussion of “the affective bond between people and place or setting” (4)), Lowenthal and Bowden’s *Geographies of the Mind* (1975), and Golledge and Rushton’s edited collection, *Spatial Choice and Spatial Behaviour* (1976). Beyond the 1970s, we might mention Agnew and Duncan’s attempt to bring together “geographical and social imaginations” in *The Power of Place* (1989) and Paul Rodaway’s *Sensuous Geographies* (1994), which offers “some possible explanations of the changing role of the senses in everyday experiences of space and place” (3). The conceptual journeys of which this particular disciplinary narrative is a very small part inform the basis of Edward Casey’s *Getting Back into Place* (1993) and *The Fate of Place* (1997). Recent critical turns in cultural geography (see the essays in Pile and Thrift’s *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation* (1995) and May and Thrift’s *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (2001)) point to a desire among contemporary academics in many fields for formulations of space to become more local and grounded than metaphorical and for the categories of time and space not to be always polarized in analysis but to be

considered as interdependent in an understanding of the complexity of social meanings (a useful position contributing to my argument in Chapters Four and Five). For my purposes, this body of work has been instructive in its close attention to the distinctive sets of socio-cultural relationships operating in particular sites (reminding us that lived spaces are not interchangeable), though my focus on performance has often made it appropriate and fruitful to adopt geographical terminology in contexts of imaginary exploration and metaphor (see Chapter One).

I want also to mention other more lyrical writing that suggestively performs a range of physical and metaphorical spaces, encouraging me at times to consider ways in which the spaces of this thesis might 'perform'. Here I would include Peter Ackroyd's imaginative 'biography', *London* (2000), Iain Sinclair's meditations in works such as *Downriver* (1995), *Lights Out for the Territory* (1998) and, with Rachel Lichtenstein, *Rodinsky's Room* (1999), Umberto Eco's playful experiment with the semiotics of detective fiction in *The Name of the Rose* (1998), Daphne du Maurier's haunting evocation of spaces that remember in *The House on the Strand* (1992), the travel writing of Bruce Chatwin (*The Songlines* (1988)) and William Fiennes (*The Snow Geese* (2002)), and Italo Calvino's creation of a set of *Invisible Cities* (1997). These writings reveal a particular knowledge of performing space that cannot be entirely embraced by more scholarly works and, as such, their role here is to probe, challenge, illuminate and enhance academic discourses of site.

Though here presented as a categorized list, I hope that my subsequent use of these varied themes and sources in support of a dialogic model of analysis draws them out of the disciplinary borders implied in this introduction, encouraging us to see their relationship less as a linear movement than a web or network in which new or surprising connections might be made.

The site of the thesis: an introductory tour

This thesis is concerned with practices that might be considered to be *out of place* in a number of ways that I suggest are useful for analysis: developed 'out of' a shared concern with spatial issues and actual places, they stage a displacement from the theatre building at the same time as their meanings slip both into and away from those

of their sites. With this in mind, the critical tactics that I have chosen are also out of place, negotiating between theoretical versions of spatiality, actual performances and more amorphous concepts drawn from fictional writing. The thesis is organized into two sections: the first allows me to position my analysis in terms of both theory and practice; the second explores four different but interlinked approaches to the theorization of non-theatre space in performance and of performance in non-theatre space.

If the thesis might indeed be imagined as a site, **Part One** is concerned with two apparently contradictory modes of orientation within its spaces: the excursion and the map. Through its Latin root, 'excursion' implies a movement outwards; implicit too, from more recent usage, is the pleasure taken in the digression it marks from 'home' or from the 'main subject' of discussion. Immediately, then, **Part One** of the thesis is interested in the contrast between this outward movement and the 'drawing in' or 'anchoring' principle of the map. The troubled nature of the relationship between these modes suggests possibilities beyond the planner/user, production/consumption, dichotomy invoked by de Certeau (just as his own analysis acknowledges that this scheme is "rather too neatly dichotomized"; 1984: xvii). I have undertaken the excursions *before* drawing the map, in part because I want to resist the usual hierarchy implied in those terms, but also, strategically, because this seems to perform something of the way in which both site-specific performances and the theories we might use to explain them are developed.

It seems appropriate, given the multiple terminologies, histories and sources that this introduction has navigated, that the thesis should involve more beginnings than endings; therefore **Chapter One** embarks upon a number of opening discussions or 'excursions', each of which might be continued with different effects in the larger-scale explorations that follow. Clearly this is in part a rhetorical device: a simplified representation in text of otherwise complex metaphorical assertions of non-linearity, structural openness and plurality. More practically, though, it serves to rehearse certain ideas that underpin much of my thinking in the subsequent chapters: ideas to do with 'real' and 'fictional' space, with the formulation of these spaces in contexts of postmodernity and globalization, and with theatre spaces and empty spaces. I suggest (and argue the case most directly in the Afterword) that it is precisely in its metaphors

– in its less direct and literal uses of language – that this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, brings into play the relationship between movement and stillness that has become significant in understanding site-specific performance.

But the thesis is also interested in methods and ideas that are not suggested in the model of the excursion. Therefore, following Chapter One's preliminary journeys *out of* the thesis, I turn to the concept of the map as structuring principle. This allows me to perform a very different kind of orientation by invoking cartography's negotiation of a number of knowledges: empirical, subjective and relational. For, unlike the excursion, the map is concerned with questions of documentation, framing, representation and scale (relative size and perspective). These are performative questions that might usefully be asked in each of the spaces visited in Chapter One. **Chapter Two**, then, surveys and maps a range of practices and debates in the field of contemporary British site-specific performance. It attempts five versions of this map, each drawn in relation to a different point of reference: locating; funding; naming; witnessing; shaping. Further, recognizing the inadequacy of the conventional map in responding to such aspects of practice as diversity, intensity and temporality (de Certeau 1984: 99), this chapter's cartography is augmented by dialogues with three practitioners in which questions raised in the survey can be addressed in greater depth, according to a smaller scale, or from a new perspective.

Together, the excursion and the map stage a dialogue between theorizing space and documenting practice, a dialogue that informs the explorations undertaken in Part Two.

If the relationship between excursions and maps is suggestively problematic, so too is the metaphor I wish to invoke to structure the four chapters of Part Two: the notion of exploration. The term itself carries considerable weight, or baggage: only certain kinds of exploration and explorer have been historically validated, while the legacy of the Columbus myth continues to produce connotations of limitless discovery, nationalistic agendas and unequal power relations (see the work of Gregory Ulmer, whose experiment in his book *Heuretics* "is to deconstruct the metaphor associating method with colonial exploration" (1994: 31)). However, a concept of exploration remains potent in academic terms, particularly in the context of spatial enquiries,

where it might become less about discovery and ‘truth’ than the negotiation and creation of cumulative narratives, including perhaps those of getting lost (see la Cecla 2000). It is also apparent that the act of exploration plays a significant role in much contemporary site-specific performance, as both creative process and spectatorial experience. Like the excursion, it implies physical movement, but this is a lengthier and more considered form of movement, involving those moments of stillness that are important to analysis.

Suggesting a potential relationship between Parts One and Two of the current thesis, then, ‘to explore’ might be to develop a way of continuing an earlier excursion or of extending or redrawing a previously drawn map. It therefore involves an attempt to analyse the relationship between the different kinds of space visited in Chapter One, the modes of mapping practice outlined in Chapter Two, and the modes of performing spaces introduced in Chapters Three to Six. In the process, the explorations propose and reflect upon a series of concepts – rules, memory, rhythm, hybridity, and the further terms and ideas to which these lead – that enable us to understand some of the ways in which we use, explain and represent spaces, both in everyday life and in performance. The variety of sources from which these terms are drawn – encompassing cultural studies, sociological analysis, literary fiction and performance theory – is intended as an appropriate critical response to the processes of making site-specific performance. Practitioners frequently work with a range of non-theatrical materials and rhetorics inherent to or suggested by their sites, and this involves the intersection of the process with other spatial practices and social spheres (tourism; ethnography; urban planning; local government; ‘the everyday’; archaeology; spatial fictions).⁸ The task of these chapters is to test out the possibilities offered by their respective concepts, investigating their usefulness as analytical manoeuvres. In arguing for the open structure that would seem necessary to allow for diversity and nuance, the thesis avoids making these manoeuvres ‘add up’ to a blueprint for site-specific critique. Rather, the four explorations of Part Two suggest a series of tactics and strategies through which we might attend to place and performance as interlinked modes of experience.

The tactics proposed in **Chapter Three** have to do with various understandings of rules, both of performance (see Schechner 2002: 214) and of space. Here, de

Certeau's concept of 'making do' is proposed as a means of theorizing the practices of both performance maker and spectator. I am interested in the ways in which spatial rules work to organize and shape our movement and behaviour, and in the processes of *making sense* (of performance and place) that they invite or foreclose. Echoing Charles Taylor's assertion that "the rule exists in the practice it 'guides'" and that it is only given "concrete shape in particular situations" (cited in Pile and Thrift 1995: 29), Chapter Three proceeds by means of a case study, not of a performance event but of a particular site in south east England where numerous performative events have been staged but which, I argue, performs its own sense of place, site, history and function in everyday life as well. Bore Place is here imagined as a heterotopia, enabling me to ask certain questions of the performativity of place in general before I move to consider more explicit moments of performance in the subsequent explorations. This chapter's focus on spatial rules also serves to counteract a tendency in reflections on site-specificity to celebrate the suspension of rules on the leaving of the theatre building.⁹ So, as well as considering those codes that are not suspended but that are rather carried with us through the theatre experience itself, I want to ask what sets of *rules of place* are replacing, or entering into dialogue with, those of the theatre. It is also in this chapter that I first discuss in some detail the processes of negotiation as a key to asking useful questions of site-specificity; this is an ongoing concern of the thesis and one to which I return in the Afterword.

In **Chapter Four** I turn to issues of memory, and specifically to the relationship between memory and place as performed in the context of the new millennium. Though largely operating in imaginary, fictional or metaphorical terms, this relationship has significant implications for the ways in which we continue to explain our *locatedness*, in its many contemporary forms. The notion of memory as specifically *sited* is a staple of detective fiction, of psychogeography and of many cultural practices of memorialization,¹⁰ but I am concerned particularly with the tools and tactics by which performance has engaged with spatial memories. In addressing these issues, one of the strategies of the chapter is to develop a metaphor of weaving. I then discuss two performance events in terms of their weaving of narratives – of history and tourism, representation and theatricality – and, simultaneously, I weave my own discussion of those performative events into my larger discussion of spatial pasts and spatial presents.

The temporal concerns informing Chapter Four become absolutely central to **Chapter Five**, which begins from the dual assertion that the minute and changing operations of spaces might usefully be described as rhythmic and that performance is a mode that deliberately manipulates patterns and certainties of time. Given that site-specific performance seeks to link these two contexts, I explore the possibilities for what Bachelard might call a “rhythmanalysis” (1994: 65) of such performance, a form of analysis that attends to flow and stasis, to chronology, synchronicity and (dis)continuity, and to the complex play between different time-frames in space(s). This exploration begins from Lefebvre’s more explicit concept of rhythmanalysis together with the geographer Mike Crang’s recent development of Lefebvre’s ideas, and continues its path through attending to the temporality of a range of performances, together with the sites in which they *take place*. The emerging relationship between spatial rhythms, human/biological rhythms and theatrical rhythms is proposed as a potentially productive way of rethinking site-specificity’s temporal shifts in conjunction with its spatial interventions.

Underlying my discussion in each of these explorations is an interest in the role (*my* role, in these examples) of the spectator, paralleling de Certeau’s emphasis on the user: pedestrian or reader. This interest is taken up explicitly in **Chapter Six**, which explores a variety of spaces – of this thesis, of existing theories of reception, and of a range of performance practices – in an attempt to imagine a useful pattern of site-specific spectatorship. Una Chaudhuri has pointed out that “sites of theatrical experience cover the range of possibilities for aligning actors and spectators in ever-changing relationships to one another” (1995: 21); here, then, I try to develop ways of understanding these varied relationships as they are played out in (dis)located performance, focusing on the concepts of self-reflexivity and hybridity.

At points throughout the chapters I have inserted boxes of text, allowing me to make interventions into the main thread of discussion: to make digressions, question my argument, offer the possibility of alternatives, point the reader in a different direction, meditate on personal experiences, and open up spaces for other – perhaps contradictory – voices. These boxes, like the performances to which they might refer, are deliberately out of place and yet seem to make suggestions for new spatial models: the reader might wish to skip over these interventions, perhaps returning to them in a new context; he or she might, by reading just the boxed sections, construct a new narrative of site-specificity.

The **Afterword** reflects upon the chapters of Parts One and Two, using their terms and the relationships between these to reorientate the reader in relation to the site of the thesis and thereby to prepare the way for future explorations. It points not only to shared concerns but also to an intriguing tension that seems to be played out in much of the work between the journey and the single vantage point, between walking and not walking. This is developed into an for the significance of negotiation, understood as both structured dialogue and improvised manoeuvre, in any attempt to create or respond to site-specificity. Finally, the thesis proposes a move off site, beyond the thesis, imagining a space where these excursions, maps, explorations and negotiations might become navigating tools for future journeying practices.

A short word about method

As I hope is suggested in this outline of structure, the enquiry of the thesis is as much an epistemological as an analytical one. That is, the thesis is concerned with the (cognitive and embodied) modes of knowledge that are performed through its subject matter; it asks how we might conduct performance research in relation to practices that are out of place and cultural or theoretical notions of space and identity that are necessarily unstable. This enquiry takes place at the same time as many practitioners, internationally, are asking similar questions of methodology and process: does site-specificity require new, or somehow different, ways of making performance? From where might these methods be drawn?¹¹

This relationship between practices studied and modes of studying means that a certain amount of reflexivity is intrinsic to the project. The rhetoric structuring the thesis – shifting between orientation, exploration and reorientation – allows for multiple discursive strategies that are also used as critical strategies. If, for example, the metaphors of excursion and map enable me to move between rhetorical and sociological research modes, their relationship also brings into critical focus the status of site-specificity in this thesis: as both live practice and written/photographed document. Similarly, I propose a critical position that regards site-specific performance as an ongoing negotiation between spatial, theatrical and personal

elements, while I choose discursive tactics – such as making do, weaving, beating time, hybridity – that perform a negotiation of their own. One of my analytical moves (see Chapter Four) is to argue for the significance of gaps in one performance's creation of meanings. This idea also stands here as a statement of my initial position and rhetorical stance, and as a reminder of my insistence throughout the thesis on a deliberate openness of the structure of the present study. The proposals put forward in this study occupy not a destination point but rather exist in the journeys and points of stillness themselves, negotiating a variety of geographical, theoretical and imaginary spaces but looking always to the *spaces between* these familiar and unfamiliar sites.

Notes:

¹ And now being re-evaluated in that field in the light of a new generation of artists exploring the label – see for example Suderburg 2000 and Kwon 2002.

² Entry on site-specific theatre for Encarta online encyclopedia 2003.

³ National Theatre, London, June-August 2003.

⁴ Now called Welfare State International.

⁵ It is worth noting, though, that *Space, Site, Intervention* includes an essay by Kwon that tests out some of the ideas of her larger project.

⁶ 'Six Axioms for Environmental Theater', reproduced in Schechner 1994.

⁷ In navigating a path through a variety of terms for discussing site-specific practices, I have found it useful in this thesis to follow de Certeau at those points when a distinction between place and space seems fruitful.

⁸ See, for example, the work of Forster & Heighes, documented at: www.roehampton.ac.uk/artshum/arts/performance/Forster_Heighes/Forster_Heighes.htm

⁹ See, for example, Rose English cited in Tufnell & Crickmay 1990, and Mike Pearson's 'My Balls/Your Chin' (1998: 40).

¹⁰ See Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* for very different versions of detective fiction. Writings by Iain Sinclair (e.g. *Downriver*) and Peter Ackroyd (e.g. *The House of Doctor Dee*) might be considered recent uses of psychogeography. And see Susanne Greenhalgh's analysis of floral tributes after the death of Diana for a sense of the spatial imperative in cultural memorialization practices (1999).

¹¹ While this thesis has a deliberately and necessarily narrow frame of reference (British performance), these larger questions arise from this initial frame, and can be extended in future to a broader view of the field.

Part One: Orientations

Chapter One: Beginnings

Three Preliminary Excursions and an Afterthought

There is too much evidence. ... Begin anywhere and you will find more material, tributaries branching from tributaries, than any one life can hope to unravel.
(Iain Sinclair, Rodinsky's Room)

This project is concerned with a variety of negotiations of space and place and explores some analytical and discursive strategies through which we might understand them. But how do we begin to envisage those elusive, interlinked concepts of space and place in order to build a useful opening context for this study? One answer might be to perform a series of beginnings, each suggestive of a different kind of space within which to locate the discussions that follow. I have positioned these 'beginnings' as preliminary 'excursions' *out of* and around the spaces of the thesis. They address key questions of the shifting notions of space through which site-specific performance and scholarship might be understood, thus testing some of the tactics and strategies to be taken up in the later chapters.

I. 'Real' sites and fictional spaces

This is a thesis about sites and the performance practices that articulate them and, as such, it is going to be necessary to talk a lot about landscape, location, positioning, vantage point, situation, mapping and boundaries – all terms that circulate quite freely in the current academic arena. For some, this 'appropriation' of spatial terms *as metaphor*, apparently detached from their literal implications, is highly problematic. In drawing up conclusions to their 1995 volume of cultural geography, *Mapping the Subject*, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift argue that as a result of the metaphorical use of such spatial figures the general is prioritized over the local and specific and the complex ways in which actual spaces might challenge these formulations is ignored. Writers employing such discussion, argue Pile and Thrift, risk becoming "trapped in a textual world", which, it is assumed, has an uncomplicated relationship to the 'real', external world.¹

Much of the writing employing spatial figures still seems curious to many geographers. It neglects the crucial importance of different *places* – performed spaces in which psychical and social boundaries are only too clear, in which resources are clearly available to some and not others, in which physical force makes contact – in fostering difference by generalising different places into in/different spatial figures. In other words, in the process of metaphorisation ground is lost.

(374)

I want to make two responses to Pile and Thrift. The first is to acknowledge that it is worth paying attention to the mobilization of actual spaces as a means of questioning the apparent simplicity of spatial terminology. Thus the “crucial importance of different places” is addressed here in Chapters Three to Five through a set of specific and differently located case studies. That is to say, many of the objects of my enquiry are particular physical places (often through the performances that take place there), about which these same spatial terms may be used in their literal sense. On one level, then, the types of enquiry entailed in focusing on site-specific performance tend to align this project with the agenda advocated by Pile and Thrift.

Secondly, though, I wonder whether, in the field of performance, this “process of metaphorisation” is always to be avoided. Theatre is a practice concerned directly with symbolic movements between ‘real’ and ‘fictional’ spaces; it therefore seems potentially fruitful to discuss it quite deliberately in terms of location, boundary or mapping, invoking the nuances that these terms carry and bringing them to bear on a new set of questions. The “play of appearances” (Blau 1992: 198) between ‘real’ place/time and represented place/time that Blau notes in performance becomes, it might be argued, more prominent when that performance is site-specific, whether the performance chooses to emphasize or to blur the rift. Indeed, Blau argues that different forms of theatre and the beliefs that they embrace can, in part, be differentiated by their means of operating within the relationship between ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’.

The forms of theater in turn depend on their attitude toward this appearance. With the ideological consciousness of postmodern theater – extending beyond the proscenium into performance art – we have seen various attempts to minimize the look by exaggerating it or playing with it, if not insisting on its extrusion on behalf of demystification: this being theater and that being reality.

(1992: 16)

For Blau, performance that moves “beyond the proscenium” concerns itself with exploring, and opening up to question, the appearance/reality relationship. Site-specificity performs one version of this. It often attends precisely to what Susan Bennett has called “disattendance factors” (1997: 68): those elements of the theatre context – noises, actions, people, architecture – that are not normally to be considered a part of the performance itself. It slips between recalled, referenced or represented spaces and physical place, the *here and now* of the spectator’s experience; often, in fact, it slips quietly between the fictionalization and the physical exploration of what is ostensibly the *same* space. This slippage, together with the questions that it raises, is itself a part of my enquiry here. If ground is indeed lost in the process of metaphorization, as Pile and Thrift have argued, I want to suggest that other ground is simultaneously gained. Nick Kaye’s assertion that site-specificity might arise “precisely in uncertainties over the borders and limits of work and site” (2000: 215) only alerts us to the complexity of such work if we allow for the rich metaphorical associations carried by the term ‘borders’, recognizing that these lend heightened significance to the marking and transgression of geographical borders.

In this context, Bert O. States’s warning of the dangers of “reading metaphor as if it were a two-way street, instead of the one-way street it usually is” (1996: 2) might appear as a challenge, its caution – like the prohibition delivered to a child that works only to invite the testing out of the prohibited action – an intriguing proposition for a route to be tried. Remembering de Certeau’s move to suggest that stories “traverse and organize places” (“In modern Athens, the vehicles of mass transportation are called *metaphorai*. To go to work or come home, one takes a “metaphor” – a bus or a train” (1984: 115)), what if the rhetorical metaphors of spatiality were to transport us the wrong way up States’s one-way street, turning back on themselves, their double-edged meanings used as a means of discussing the geographical ‘reality’ to which they originally referred?

So we start with questions of terminology, metaphor and slippage; with a set of linked ambiguities surrounding the relationship between ‘appearance’ and ‘reality’ and between ‘metaphorical space’ and ‘literal place’. These ambiguities are mirrored in

the slippage between the literal and the metaphorical in the terms that are used to write about both space and performance.

"You can just see a little peep of the passage in Looking-glass House, if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open: and it's very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different on beyond. Oh, Kitty, how nice it would be if we could only get through into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got, oh! such beautiful things in it! Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through –"

Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass, and what Alice found there

II. (Re)Conceptualizing space

This is a thesis about sites and the performance practices that articulate them, but it is situated within a contemporary moment when space and the activities within it are in the process of being re-imagined. That is, what this enterprise might mean is subject to change in the light of new technologies and patterns of spatial movement and their increasing significance in the ways we orientate our everyday lives. The virtual sites of the Internet, the narrative possibilities being explored through digital technologies, the varied experiences of globalization, and the movements figured by contemporary tourism, business travel, multiculturalism, migration and other forms of (dis)placement are all part of the story, imagined differently each time we attempt to locate ourselves and our performances.

Gregory L. Ulmer argues that new technologies are forcing us to rethink our notions of space and spatiality:

Hypermedia, in the electronic apparatus, requires another radically different commitment to space from that of the book ... The assumption is that changes in the equipment of memory involve changes in people and institutions as well. ... It is not that memory is no longer thought of as "place," but that the notion itself of spatiality has changed.

(1994: 35-6)

The methodology proposed by Ulmer in response to this context constitutes an experimentation with space and a questioning of spatial issues. The writing becomes part of the active investigation and 'place' is not just subject matter for the writing. Ulmer's approach allows us to view theory as itself a creative practice. Positioning

his work at the meeting point between pedagogy and invention, and in the context of hypermedia, Ulmer asks what research methods might best be used in an age of electronic technology, and similarly how these new technologies might lead to new ways of imagining and representing what it is to carry out research. With the goal of finding “forms appropriate for conducting cultural studies research in relation to the electronic media” (xi), Ulmer describes and tests creative integrations of criticism and invention, labelling the resulting research genres “mystory” (1989) and “chorography” (1994). He is, in short, interested in how academic research might ‘perform’ and, as such, this might form a site-specific performance.

In other contexts, too, scholars have been interested in the performative connections between spatial understandings and our means of organizing written (and spoken) ideas. If, as Walter Ong (1982) has suggested, writing reconceptualized the consciousness of previously oral cultures and print, again, brought about a new way of thinking about space, the late twentieth century revolution in information technology revises our models of space and place (as they were, it is important to remember, differently revised at other historical moments, such as the invention of the telephone and the development of air travel). Conceptions of space and place, in relation to each other and to notions of time, have changed through history and across cultures, each occupying a position of privilege at different moments. Edward Casey has carried out probably the most extensive survey of the changing relationships of these ideas in western culture in his 1997 volume *The Fate of Place*, the final section of which (‘The Reappearance of Place’) asserts his agreement with other commentators (for example, Chaudhuri 1995) in characterizing the current situation as one in which issues of place (and of particular places) are regaining (social, cultural and academic) importance. Such assertions form a necessary context for the study of site-specific performance, but I would be wary of arguing for a major paradigm shift. By dividing issues of time, space and place into distinct historical periods, we risk emphasizing important differences over perhaps equally instructive similarities and tend to gloss over nuances of actual modes of creating and responding to conceptualizations of time-space. One version of such creation and response can be found in the ways in which literature, in de Certeau’s model, transforms its places into spaces.

In Britain in the early 1980s a series of children's adventure books entitled 'fighting fantasy' became popular.² These constituted a performative writing of sorts (Phelan 1997: 11-12), performing the space of the page in quite simple but influential ways. The reader/adventurer would read a section of text and would then be faced with a choice or set of choices as to what should happen next: to walk into the tunnel or turn and retrace one's path? to fight the dragon or find a suitable hiding place? to grab the sack of gold and risk incurring the wrath of the goblin guarding it or wait until the goblin has fallen asleep? A different page number would be associated with each possibility and the reader would move back and forth through the book (sometimes 'arriving' at a point s/he had already visited and having to try another route) until the quest was successfully completed or the adventurer ran out of 'stamina', 'luck' or 'weapon' points and 'died'.

Part of the success of the fighting fantasy books lay in the degree of interaction that they offered the reader and the non-linear format that they encompassed, thus being closer in form to children's games of make-believe than to their previous reading experiences. The invitation on the covers is to "create your own adventure", with all the freedom of choice and 'movement' that this phrase implies. But of course such freedom is to some extent an illusion: the choices and the number of paths through the adventure are limited and contained within a controlled framework.

More than a decade before the Internet was a daily reality for a large proportion of the population, then, the fighting fantasy books offered alternative reading formats to the strictly linear and fostered a controlled interactivity of the kind now familiar in the electronic media. No longer did the reader need to "begin at the beginning", in the words of Lewis Carroll's *King of Hearts*, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop" (1982: 106); what these books imagined was an alternative spatiality, a different order of space than that enacted by the dominant model of the twentieth century novel. However, this comparison might obscure the fact that the twentieth century novel cannot be drawn upon as a kind of control in contemporary digital experiments but itself represents a particular means of configuring and manipulating space. It, in turn, envisages its sites differently from the serialization of nineteenth century novels, or printed poetry, or the palimpsests of hand-written manuscripts with their corrections and marginalia, or the narrative patterns of oral storytelling.

So we start with questions of the multiple spaces in which we operate and the various media in which we record and shape these operations, recognizing the need to pay attention to the historical contexts of our spatial understanding. Whether the renewed interest in spatiality noted in a number of recent academic enquiries is a backlash against a perceived disorientation and displacement at “this imperilled postmodern moment” (Casey 1993: xvii) or a means of exploring potentially productive new categories of space that have emerged out of postmodernity (multiculturalism, heterotopia, third space, the rhizome), it has produced a discourse that is essentially cross-disciplinary and concerned with a variety of ways of re-imagining figures of culture, economics, creativity and identity in terms of their relationships with place.

“In Eudoxia, which spreads both upward and down, with winding alleys, steps, dead ends, hovels, a carpet is preserved in which you can observe the city’s true form. At first sight nothing seems to resemble Eudoxia less than the design of that carpet, laid out in symmetrical motives whose patterns are repeated along straight and circular lines, interwoven with brilliantly colored spires, in a repetition that can be followed throughout the whole woof. But if you pause and examine it carefully, you become convinced that each place in the carpet corresponds to a place in the city...”

An oracle was questioned about the mysterious bond between two objects so dissimilar as the carpet and the city. One of the two objects – the oracle replied – has the form the gods gave the starry sky and the orbits in which the worlds revolve; the other is an approximate reflection, like every human creation.

For some time the augurs had been sure that the carpet’s harmonious pattern was of divine origin. The oracle was interpreted in this sense, arousing no controversy. But you could, similarly, come to the opposite conclusion: that the true map of the universe is the city of Eudoxia.”

Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities

III. Theatre spaces and empty spaces

This is a thesis about sites and the performance practices that articulate them and it therefore maintains an implicit link to the potent signifier of the theatre building. “There is no doubt”, Peter Brook declares, “that a theatre can be a very special place” (1996: 98); it can, sometimes simultaneously, also be a confusing, relaxing, intimidating, exciting, distancing place, a place of competing and often hidden economies, political charges and aesthetic convictions. Whichever of these resonates more for any one person in any one situation, it is worth noting that ‘theatre’ (look the

word up in a dictionary) is frequently thought of first (and, by implication, foremost?) as a structure, before it is a social unit (this double meaning suggesting links with the church) or a collection of performance material. Beyond dictionary definitions, however, for anybody interested in making, watching or writing about 'theatre' it is more often a complex mix of these, both enticing and problematic.

Theatre, then, as concept and as building might be said to be 'full' of many things, if not always of audiences, and this has, for some, seemed to obscure a simpler, more fundamental understanding of what exactly theatre *is*. Such an understanding has famously proved useful for Peter Brook, who announces that:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. Yet when we talk about theatre this is not quite what we mean. Red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter, darkness, these are all confusedly superimposed in a messy image covered by one all-purpose word.

(1996: 9)

Since Brook published *The Empty Space* in 1968, a train of disapproval of its title concept has been gathering momentum. For a variety of connected reasons, in particular social (Read 1993) and political (Ngugi 1997), this representation of the performance space as a vacuum has been challenged. While Brook's was a reaction against the conventions of the theatre as he experienced them at the time, an attempt to extract from the 'trappings' of mainstream drama the essence of what it is that makes a theatre event 'work', when re-examined in the current theoretical climate his disregard of the character, history, people and practices of each theatrical space and the implications of these for performance is notable. The theatre space is never empty, though that does not mean that the impulses that have, at different times, sought to empty it of certain associations, ideas or physical arrangements (think, for example, of the theatrical possibilities that the black box seems to represent when compared with the proscenium) should always be dismissed.

Interestingly, some of Brook's most analysed performance work invites precisely the sort of spatial enquiry that his writings would seem to preclude: I am thinking here, for example, of *The Conference of the Birds* (see Heilpern 1989), *The Mahabharata* (both live and in its most enduring manifestation in video format) and even his

extended work in the Bouffes du Nord, Paris (see Todd & Lecat 2003). But, though we might bring questions of space to bear upon these examples, such questions have not been at the heart of the creation of the work. Arguably, then, the mode of performance that articulates the clearest and most systematic rejoinder to Brook's empty space is that describing itself as 'site-specific', whose spaces can never be empty (though they might, problematically, appear to be *emptied* for the duration of the performance). Neither, however, can site-specificity remove itself from the legacy of the theatre building, with all the 'messy' connotations that entails.

So we start with questions of theatricality, solidity, and what it means – in economic, political or cultural terms – for a space to be *empty* or *full* or for a performance to carry out the functions of *emptying* or *filling*.

"To great dreamers of corners and holes nothing is ever empty, the dialectics of full and empty only correspond to two geometrical non-realities. The function of inhabiting constitutes the link between full and empty. A living creature fills an empty refuge, images inhabit, and all corners are haunted, if not inhabited."

Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space

To Begin Again: Places that Matter

I want to conclude these preliminary explorations with an anecdote. The scene is a busy pub in which I am socializing with a group of friends. Here somebody, not for the first time, asks me what it is that I have been researching for the last X years. In this instance, though, it seems that the quick answer ('theatre and performance' – hoping that both terms together will negate any confusion about medical or business practices that they seem to create singly) will not satisfy the enquirer, and neither will the slightly more precise 'site-specific performance'. Instead, I am asked to explain. I have been here before, and struggle to give an appropriate 'small talk' style supplement to the 'outside the theatre building' answer, aiming to steer clear of the impression that I spend all my summers watching Shakespeare in Regent's Park (though such a project might raise a quite different set of questions about relationships between theatre and social space). Finally the response that satisfies my criteria, if not my acquaintance, is this: the place has to matter to the performance.

‘To matter to’ and ‘to be matter for’, with all the problematic connotations of spiritualism and mysticism, resourcism and colonization that these ideas might carry: on pondering my response later, it seems far more appropriate to have used this term than my hurried grappling for ‘the right words’ seemed to suggest. The relationship between place and performance needs to be considered in terms of both significance (often addressed through the concept of engagement) and materiality. I would like to invoke this double-meaning here – with a debt, of course, to Judith Butler (1993) – as an invitation to think about the myriad ways in which actual places (as substance and as consequence, as site, space, environment, location and, crucially, movement between these) shape our physical experience and understanding of theatrical performance, and vice versa.

This seems a useful place for the thesis to begin. Again.

Notes:

¹ The notion of the ‘real’ is significant here because, though problematised through a postmodern resistance to grand narratives and a single history (see, for example, Vattimo 1997: 149-150), it is used as a distinguishing category in a number of discussions of space. Pile and Thrift, in the example cited here, are interested in an understanding of “real, external space” (373) that might be contrasted to, and used as a metaphor for, the spaces of subjectivity. Their insistence on the term is tied to a sense of the specific political and economic situations that might be ignored through postmodernism’s privileging of discourse above experience. Pearson and Shanks, too, enter into this debate through a focus on notions of ‘authenticity’ (2001: 112-119), and this is taken up more explicitly in my discussion of memory in Chapter Four. Finally, I would note Nick Kaye’s discussion of ‘real space’, a term he draws from Lefebvre and distinguishes from the ‘virtual space’ of an art or performance work. Our understanding of site-specificity, he suggests, arises from the shifting and unstable relationship between these categories.

² The first of these, Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone’s *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, was published by Puffin in 1982.

Chapter Two: Mappings

A Survey of Site-Specific Performance in Britain

*Like the painting, the map is a selective composition,
but whilst the painting depicts a discrete place, the map
covers a continuous space which is always potentially
part of a much larger space
(Paul Rodaway, Sensuous Geographies)*

*Maps designed in terms of centers and peripheries,
of frontiers and adventure, no longer correspond to
the territory
(Gregory L. Ulmer, Heuretics)*

It is not just in relation to theoretical contexts that this project is orientated: it is important that the modes of proceeding, of ‘making do’, adopted in my discussion and analysis have a clear relationship to those developed through a broad range of actual performance practices. This chapter, then, begins to develop a series of overlapping maps, each sketching part of the field of current site-specific performance practices in Britain, inking in some of the prominent landmarks within that field and pointing to potentially rewarding paths that might be followed from here.¹ It asks such questions as: who is producing site-specific performance in Britain? Who sees it? Where do these performances occur, or, more particularly, ‘take place’? What tools are used to construct a performance of place? Why is the site-specific mode chosen? And, crucially, how is it variously defined?

The maps are drawn primarily from a questionnaire (see appendix one) completed by performance companies and solo artists, but also take account of information from supporting documents and telephone conversations, from funding bodies and newspaper reviews. While it is occasionally appropriate to use a statistical format listing proportions and relative percentages, in the main my presentation of the survey results is discursive, reflecting the nature of many of the questions asked and responses given.

There is room on the maps to indicate not only common points of reference but also points of departure: the aim is not to arrive at an all-encompassing paradigm of site-

specific practice, but rather to pose, and begin to explore, some general questions. What are the preoccupations – thematic, formal and pragmatic – of practitioners producing site-specific performance? And how do practitioners represent themselves, their work and site-specific performance in general to themselves – and to others?

Inevitably, as a survey of this kind seeks to include certain people and practices, it also excludes others. I have only, for instance, included artists based in England, Scotland and Wales – this provides a relatively small (and, in practical terms, manageable) geographical area that nonetheless covers a variety of political and cultural as well as actual landscapes. Such decisions made on the range of the survey clearly skew the results in ways that will not be known until comparative studies are made; in particular, it would be interesting to compare this British perspective with like practices across other cultures.² Similarly, the process of targeting people for the survey needs to be acknowledged, because this too will affect the nature of the results.

Talking: interviews with practitioners

The position of the surveyor is an intriguing one, as de Certeau reminds us; it is at once seductive and politically problematic, with its potentially misleading promise of “seeing the whole” (1984: 92). A different order of information is gathered at ground level, the level of practice, “below the thresholds at which visibility [or, rather, the surveyor’s type of visibility] begins” (93). Therefore, while recognizing the usefulness of, and the pleasure taken in, the form of overview aimed at in this chapter, I want to temper this with closer attention to some specific experiences of creating site-specific performance. In the boxes interspersed in the text, then, I introduce material drawn from interviews with the artistic directors of three performance companies, whose work engages in different ways with site-specific modes of performance:³

- *Petra Kuppers of The Olimpias;*
- *Clifford McLucas of Brith Gof;*
- *David Wheeler of IOU.*

These conversations are instructive in a number of ways without needing to be held up as representative of other practices or general trends. Beginning with a shared interest in space and performance, they are concerned variously with ‘new’ media and ‘old’ languages, with theatricality and representation, and with processes of identification and ownership. In many ways, these dialogues help to clarify and expand upon some of the ideas discussed in the survey, but by focusing on the particular concerns of three very different practitioners they open up spaces that the ‘maps’ cannot.

Potential respondents were sought through a number of methods: in addition to contacting artists of whom I had previous knowledge, I used web searches, recommendations (from funding bodies and from those already responding to the survey) and two internet mailbases (one on the theme of live art and one for university drama departments). Though leaning more toward the 'theatre' end of the performance spectrum, the survey includes responses from dance, dance-theatre, installation and live art. This diversity allows us to ask what is happening in and between these various categories with regard to their various relationships to place.

The 44 practitioners represented (and listed in appendix two) range from those who define themselves precisely through their site-specific approach (such as Wrights & Sites (performance collective) and Grid Iron Theatre Company) to those whose non-theatre-based work engages with some of the methodologies arising out of site-specific practice (these might include Station House Opera and London Bubble), and from live art practitioners to theatre companies producing scripted plays. Nine work as solo artists, while the companies generally operate with a small team. Almost all follow the pattern of having a core group of permanent members (four on average) and then drawing on a pool of (an average of 15) associates, collaborators and freelancers on a project-by-project basis. Though this survey is concerned particularly with site-specific work, it should be noted that less than a third of the respondents work solely with this mode; the rest produce some theatre-based work as well, though it is impossible to summarize the site-specific/non-site-specific ratio as the proportions vary enormously. These facts are not irrelevant to this study, as they outline the context within which site-specific work is created. For those practitioners working both in theatre buildings and in and from other sites, a relationship between the two modes is forged; an example of this is given by Theresa Heskins, artistic director of Pentabus, when she notes that site-specific work "allows us to review and experiment with dynamics that are dictated by modern theatre buildings, especially the relationship between performer and audience and performer and venue".⁴

How far do the responses to the survey situate site-specific performance in a particular era? Of the 41 respondents for whom I have a founding date (three solo artists did not give dates of starting to perform), the average (median) date of founding is 1993. Of these:

- one (Out of the Blue) was founded in 2000,
- there were 24 founded in the 1990s,
- nine in the 1980s,
- five in the 1970s
- and two (Welfare State and Moving Being) in 1968.

It may, of course, be that these figures simply reflect the short 'life-span' of performance companies of all kinds, making it obvious that I would find far more details of companies founded in the past decade or so. It does seem to be the case, however, that the term 'site-specific' only really began to have currency in theatrical (rather than sculptural) terms in the mid- to late-1980s, with companies such as the influential Welsh-based Brith Gof popularizing the form. And it is only in the last four years or so that newspaper reviewers (primarily in *The Guardian* and *The Observer*) have begun to use the term to describe theatre and performance works (the London International Festival of Theatre has, together with the practice of companies such as Edinburgh's Grid Iron, been instrumental in bringing such work to the attention of reviewers).

30 August 2001 – interview with Petra Kuppers

Petra Kuppers founded The Olimpias in 1998 as a series of performance projects through which issues of disability, mental health and community art could be explored. These concerns have influenced the form of the work, which often engages with 'new' and digital media, and Kuppers has been particularly interested in teasing out the social and cultural implications of non-theatre spaces through her performance work.

Born in Germany, Kuppers taught until recently at the Manchester Metropolitan University and now holds the post of Assistant Professor in Performance Studies at Bryant College, Rhode Island. She has published extensively on areas of disability and performance and image politics.

Among the projects of The Olimpias, Kuppers refers in the interview to Traces (1996-9; a community project leading to a video installation), Landscaping (April 2001; a performance/installation created by two disabled performers⁵ and a geographer for the stairwell of the Chisenhale Dance Space in London and billed on the website – see appendix two – as "a meditation on everyday space"), Body Spaces (October 2000; three installations responding to different Manchester sites and developed with a group of young disabled people) and Earth Stories (2001; a video poem made out of a site-specific residency in the Brecon Beacons with a mental health users group). The group has recently been selected as one of ten disability artists representing Wales in a national advertising and poster campaign.

This interview was recorded in late summer 2001, when I spent a day with Petra Kuppers at her home in the Brecon Beacons, Wales. The house overlooks the beautiful scenery of the Usk Reservoir and together these spaces – the personal and domestic and the countryside landscape bearing the mark of human intervention – formed the site for Earth Stories. On the day of the interview, Kuppers was anxiously awaiting the arrival of her visa to enable her to travel to the United States to take up her new post in Rhode Island.

I. Locating

The first of this chapter's maps focuses on concerns that cartography is well suited to addressing, as it aims to plot the *geographical* patterns of site-specific performance, using the survey results to ask where in Britain such work is being produced. This question has two components: firstly discerning the pattern across different areas of the country, and secondly identifying the *types* of site that site-specific performance chooses. I will return to this latter component shortly. On the former, though, we might make some observations approaching a hypothesis. Just under a third of the respondents are based in London; many of these tend to fall into the live art/performance art bracket. The majority of the artists, then, are based outside of London and the south-east, in rural as well as urban areas: for example, Scotland, Yorkshire, Cornwall, Devon and Wales. Is there something in these spaces that attracts practitioners to their sites? Despite the urban legacies of Situationist and psychogeographic practices, it seems that an ideological positioning in opposition to the dominant spaces of the theatre is often allied to a positioning against London.

Wales has only a limited range of theatre auditoria. Experimental theatre has always sought other venues. This is not solely through expediency, but challenges the notion that the auditorium is a neutral vessel of representation, seeing it rather as the spatial machine of a dominant discourse which distances spectators from spectacle and literally 'keeps them in their place', in the dark, sitting in rows, discouraging of eye contact and interaction.

(Pearson 1997: 94-5)

Though site-specific work might spring from a lack of theatre auditoria outside of the main urban centres, it does not always take up the challenge that Pearson discusses here. Cornish company Kneehigh, for example, note that "Cornwall is very low on conventional performance spaces – the Hall for Cornwall, the only venue in Cornwall

which has a middle scale capacity, only opened in 1997” and that this fact informed the company’s progression from working with unconventional spaces to developing its “almost filmic form of site specific performance”, Landscape Theatre.

In many other instances, though, site-specific work involves a (more or less explicit) political decision to work against the dominant discourse of London, its theatre buildings and its theatre tradition. This might be particularly true in Wales, Scotland and Cornwall, which have variously sought their independence from a ‘Great Britain’ or ‘United Kingdom’ that would tie them politically and socially to the English capital. There is a strong positive correlation between being based outside of London and prioritizing a sense of locality in the work: few of the London-based artists are especially concerned with immediate locality, many taking their work outside of London on a regular basis, while the social, cultural and political resonances of their bases are particularly important to companies such as Welfare State International (Cumbria), Cotton Grass Theatre Company (Peak District), Moving Being (Cardiff), Wrights & Sites (Exeter) and Storm Theatre Company (Coventry). For 19 of the 44 artists surveyed, the decision to move out of the theatre building is an explicitly political one, “engender[ing] ideas of place and community” (Lone Twin) and “renegotiating what a space has come to mean” (Storm Theatre) in spaces that are variously controlled, accessed and inhabited.

And what of the other component of spatial patterning: the type of site that site-specific performance chooses? If, as Richard Schechner has suggested, “theater places are maps of the cultures where they exist” (1988: 161), the search for alternative venues in which to stage performance is a means of encountering and creating other maps of the cultural space. The survey results reveal certain similarities and possibilities for categorization, and the most popular sites can be delineated as follows:

- parks/playgrounds (London Bubble’s *Gulliver’s Travels*;⁶ Grid Iron’s *Decky Does a Bronco*⁷)
- work buildings/sites – e.g. factories, disused offices, former mines (Kneehigh’s *Hell’s Mouth*;⁸ Creation Theatre’s *Hamlet*⁹)

- churches (Kate Lawrence's *St Catherine's Chapel Performance*;¹⁰ Bobby Baker's *Box Story*¹¹)
- galleries/theatre building environs (The Olimpias' *Landscaping*;¹² Jude Kerr's *Conundrum*¹³)
- museums & grounds (Hester Reeve's *From Trees to Houses*;¹⁴ Brith Gof's *From Memory*¹⁵)
- beaches (IOU's *A Drop in the Ocean*;¹⁶ Red Earth's *Meeting Ground*¹⁷)

FW: Petra, your recent work with The Olimpias seems to operate at the intersection between dance, theatre, new media, and community arts practice. What influences have led you to this mix of work?

PK: Well, one thing that has led to the creation of The Olimpias and that led also to the kinds of aesthetics that I'm now embracing is my work in community environments. I work from the premise that in order to have a voice to speak with you need to have a space to speak from, and that place to speak from is your understanding of your physicality, the ownership of your body and the ownership of the space that surrounds you. For me there is a very clear relationship between representation and oppression, having no images by which you see yourself, being excluded from many things and the way that exclusion, I think, manifests itself in the way that people inhabit their bodies, or don't inhabit these bodies. And this [the Traces project] is really where I started to think about new media, that was the first time that I used new media as something other than a postmodern background. In other shows, I have used reels of film and video, but this was the first time that it became an integral part of what we were doing, that we were creating images ourselves.

FW: As a tool, an intervention...?

PK: That's right. Really the problem was that a lot of my performers didn't want to be in front of an audience. And of course we still have a social regime which says 'this is performance' and 'this is not performance'. The people I work with very rarely fall into what you would consider 'good dance' in those kinds of categories.

FW: Do you see a direct link between the work that you were interested in doing to do with taking a political ownership of the space of your body and your subsequent use of site-specific modes?

PK: Yes, very much. There's a direct link between finding a space for yourself in your own body and then placing that body in space. So a lot of the interventions that we worked on had to do with paying attention to the way that we understand the space to work for us and paying attention to how we inhabit the space, the rules of how we inhabit a space. In the work I've written about Body Spaces I talk about blueprinting: how certain environments are blueprinted for certain people. Now, in terms of mental health that might be a bit different, but what you still see is that certain people are included and that other people are excluded and if you work with specific spaces you can create a different sense of ownership.

Also popular are tunnels (privileged images of Freudian psychoanalysis), shopping centres, hospitals and castles. The recurrence of particular types of site invites us to consider their implications: what associations does each carry into the site-specific process? Parks and playgrounds might be grouped with beaches in their status as public spaces; such sites are, as Hanon Reznikov notes in interview with Cindy Rosenthal, “play spaces” (in Cohen-Cruz 1998: 157). Though operating differently to the street, these spaces allow performance to utilize one of the ideas behind street theatre: hoping, as Sophia Lycouris of Kunstwerk-Blend notes, “to attract the passers-by”.

The park, along with the beach and, indeed, the shopping centre, speaks of “public inhabitability” (Bloomer & Moore 1977: 84) and is a factor, therefore, in enabling artists “to make the work accessible” (London Bubble).

The appeal of sites such as museums, galleries and theatre buildings (but not the traditional stage space) is, it seems, somewhat different. It is here that performance might forge an intervention into cultural spaces, “reflecting or inverting its own habitat” (Jude Kerr). It is also worth noting that many established venues now invite such work, as part of their obligation to create community and education programmes.¹⁸ Churches, too, are privileged cultural spaces, but it is perhaps more significant that they are associated with heightened emotions and, frequently, with evocative architecture.¹⁹ Work sites, on the other hand, bring with them a different dynamic, and one that is essentially quotidian, placing the performance in the context of the everyday. Depending partly on the type of work site, its status (operational or disused) and the timing of the event (during or outside of working hours), site-specific performance might choose to expose political or social issues surrounding the site to those outside (as in Brith Gof’s *Gododdin*, briefly discussed in Chapter Five) or to engage with those for whom the site is a workplace. The latter approach was a concern of Sue Palmer’s in all stages of her *Hair Raising* project (performed in GJ’s hair salon in Shepton Mallet, February 2001; see Figure 1). Palmer recalls that

with *Hair Raising* the thing that excited me was that this place I had chosen was peopled, it was a working everyday environment. It wasn’t abandoned, or derelict. ... So for me it’s not just about a place, but the

people who normally inhabit and use that place. For it wouldn't exist without them.

Though performed in the evenings, after the salon had closed, the work extended into the everyday life of the salon in a number of ways: as well as (eventually) encouraging some of the salon staff and customers to attend the performances, Palmer made installations for the salon and placed booklets (featuring stories about hair) among the magazines. These installations and booklets, along with the project website featuring audio files of hair-related recordings, become a further form of performance, manifestations of non-traditional disseminating strategies that can be experienced alongside or independently of the live performance. It is also significant that such 'extras' can be named as project 'deliverables' for the purposes of attracting funding, functioning to take the work to a wider public than the live, ephemeral event itself could reach.

A further point to make about the sites chosen by practitioners might be drawn from Marvin Carlson's research into *Places of Performance*. Carlson suggests that

generally speaking, the populist directors who have utilized the streets and other nontraditional urban locations during the past twenty years have not

Figure 1: Sue Palmer and Vic Llewellyn, *Hair Raising* (2001)



wished to repeat performances in a specific space, but have on the contrary sought new spaces for each production, spaces whose already existing semiotics would provide an important element of the performance.

(1989: 34)

6 October 2001 – interview with Clifford McLucas

Clifford McLucas joined Brith Gof in 1989 and was its artistic director (for some time jointly with Mike Pearson) until his sad and untimely death in 2002. Steeped in the culture, language, traditions and politics of and pertaining to Wales, Brith Gof's practice has been instrumental in the development of British site-specific performance. The company is particularly known for its large-scale performances that interrogate the political and social implications of industrial (or post-industrial) spaces. In the interview, Clifford McLucas refers to two such projects: Haeam (1992; Old British Coal workshop, Tredegar) and Gododdin (1988; Rover Car Factory, Cardiff).

More recently, however, the group has moved away from its "hand-in-glove" relationship to industrial sites and towards the more layered ambiguity of works such as Tri Bywyd ('Three Lives', 1995; forest in west Wales), which combined 'found' and 'imported' performance material – that is, that drawn from both within and outside of the site. McLucas also expressed through the interview his growing interest in "working in media entirely different to live performance". This interest manifests itself most clearly in his recent Three Landscapes project, which experiments "with graphics, with models of mapping, with journals and journeys [and] with aerial photography" to develop a performative response to the sites of Hafod (west Wales), an archaeological dig in Sicily, and the San Andreas fault in California.

I met Clifford McLucas at the hotel (he'd described it to me beforehand as "a bit seedy") in Holborn, London, where he was staying before flying back out to California to begin a second year as Senior Research Fellow at Stanford University. Less than a month had passed since the catastrophic attacks on the United States of 11 September and normal air transport schedules had only recently been resumed. We recorded the interview in the hotel's dining room, against the backdrop of the torrential rain outside.

This trend reflects the work of the majority of practitioners in this study, who continually seek out new sites to provide fresh performance dynamics. Creation Theatre Company, however, persist in re-using the same site for more than one performance under the label 'site-specific'. Between 1996 and 2002, Creation staged nine performances within the grounds of Oxford's Magdalen College School. They²⁰ argue that this work differs from the popular 'Shakespeare in the park' category of performance through the re-engagement with the physical aspects of the site that inform each production; as a recent article in *The Guardian* stated, "Creation takes the notion of open-air theatre extremely seriously, arguing that too much of it fails to

exploit properly the possibilities presented by the environment in which it is performed”.²¹ While the choice of wording here alerts us to the ethical questions raised by a practice that aims to “exploit” its site, it remains that repeated explorations of the same space offer the possibility, as Carlson suggests, to “draw upon the same environmental semiotics and indeed develop new codes out of an accumulated performance experience” (1989: 36).

In all cases, though, the site-specific work of these practitioners is located in physical, geographical space. Despite web terminology that talks in terms of sites and visits, the tendency is not to approach cyberspace as part of the same mode of practice. Cyberspace, of course, has features specific to it when compared with other modes of communication, but unlike ‘real’ spaces it is broadly non-specific in its replicability and vastness; that is, one part of cyberspace behaves and looks very much like any other. The tendency not to define its use as site-specific does, however, raise questions of how a site can be defined and where its boundaries might be drawn. Where cyberspace features in the work of the artists surveyed its role is generally in the fields of documentation, promotion or education; alternatively, as in the case of *The Olimpias*, ‘cyber’ movement is woven into the performance sites in order to explore the two orders of space “in relation to each other and as they impinge on each other”. Artists, then, might be interested in the implications that cyberspace holds for our understanding of ‘real’ spaces, but would not usually use the ‘site-specific’ label for web-based projects. As Impossible Theatre argue, “the thing is, real ‘sites’ already have a presence, a history, an identity which adds to the work – not really true in the same way of cyberspace”.

II. Funding

The economic context of current performance, particularly site-specific performance, is worth mapping in this project because it not only helps to decide who creates performance work and where this work will be seen but also, significantly, impacts upon the types of work that can be made.

Leaving aside the differences in types of site, does the choice of a non-theatre venue in itself affect the way the work is funded (and therefore the way in which it is

produced)? Ten of the 31 respondents producing non-site-specific work as well feel that they are funded differently for their site-specific practice, though this can have positive as well as negative connotations:

“in my experience it’s easier to convince a company to give you cash for a venue based work” (Justin Mckeown);

“I believe that YOTA²² only funded the project because it was site specific” (Sue Palmer);

“I was able to (and needed to) raise a lot more in sponsorship and in kind donations than I have in the past for non site-specific projects” (Kate Lawrence).

FW: What are the types of place that interest you most when it comes to creating work?

CM: When I started working with [Brith Gof] we made performances in urban sites: old factories, docklands areas, all of those derelict urban locations that hung around post-industrial cities like Cardiff and parts of London in the late ‘80s. At first, because of my background in architecture, I was very excited about engaging with those places. Over ten years, that enthusiasm’s shifted and over the past five years I’ve been more concerned to do things in rural locations. Now this is not an aesthetic decision. One of the reasons I’m excited about working in rural locations in Wales is because that’s where the cultural situation is most stark. In other words, if you make a piece of site-specific work – and we’ll have to define what we mean by that soon – in a place like an old factory in Cardiff, you can do what you like: nobody’s going to say it’s inappropriate. But if you work in a ruined farmhouse in the middle of a forest in west Wales people will say when something is not appropriate, because there is still a living history associated with that place. There are people living lives there, so whether you like it or not, you’re much more implicated culturally, politically, geographically, socially. That’s when it’s possible to do very deep and rich work. I’m not terribly interested in making site-specific work anywhere else but Wales because I think with those places (another thing we’ve got to start talking about is place rather than site) comes a whole set of conditions, possibilities and potentials for what I think is a very radical contemporary practice within a ‘post-colonial’ world.

FW: So for you there’s an ethical implication in your work. There are more ethical questions asked of you in a rural location.

CM: Absolutely. But remember, Brith Gof is a Welsh-language company. The Welsh language is normally associated with very specific and conservative traditions and yet we work in what I would consider to be a fairly contemporary way. What’s lacking in many small places like Wales is a belief, I think, in a contemporary possibility for its cultural identity. As an Englishman, working in the Welsh language is a political act – it’s about finding a way of existing honourably in this place. So Brith Gof’s work has always been run through with an ethics. What we tried to do is to find a way of making work which comes at issues, historical events or cultural events in ways which are poetic but which are also resonant within the reality of the political situation in Wales.

Those responding to the survey report widely differing experiences of the economics of producing site-specific performance. For Emergency Exit Arts, it can be “costly, risky and challenging”; similarly, Helena Goldwater suggests that “it is a very hard choice to make over the luxury and ease of a theatre booking” and therefore the site is chosen “because it is right for the idea” rather than for financial reasons. Others point to the expense of bringing in appropriate resources, including sometimes electricity, as well as to the one-off nature of much site-specific work, making it less financially viable than performance that can enjoy a long run at one venue or tour to a succession of arts centres and theatres. On the other hand, non-theatre sites may offer cheap or free performance and rehearsal space (Bill Aitchison, for example, states that “it is certainly true that I never pay for the use of a space. As my work is not funded I can continue to work independently by using the types of spaces that I do”) and might provide naturally rich or spectacular settings and ‘effects’.²³ As Rotozaza maintain, “it’s often been a way of producing work of maximum impact on a minimum budget”.

Most of the practitioners in the survey (36) receive some funding through the Arts Councils;²⁴ of these, all but five rely on other sources of funding as well (for example, lottery grants, workshops and education projects, sponsorship, commissions, festivals and box-office split). Almost two-thirds of the respondents have to seek funding separately for each project; a third supplement some revenue funding with project funding, while only two are fully revenue supported.

One area of dissatisfaction that emerges from the survey is the issue of categorization for the purposes of funding. At the time of the survey, the Arts Councils and RABs were divided into departments, but responsibilities were liable to be redistributed and departments re-named, there existed no uniform division across the funding bodies, and artists often found themselves funded through different departments from project to project (it is perhaps too early to judge whether the new funding arrangements will better serve artists). Julian Maynard Smith, of the London-based performance art company Station House Opera, expresses dissatisfaction with the way performance has been categorized in this country. He explains that, because continental funders are not as interested in labels as UK organizations, “over the years it has been European work that’s sustained us”. The Whalley Range All Stars echo the feelings of many when they state that “our work doesn’t fit easily into convenient boxes”

when it comes to funding. 'Site-specific' does not operate as a category in itself in this context: instead, such work has been variously funded under the banners of 'visual arts', 'combined arts', 'performing arts', 'drama', 'multidisciplinary arts', 'dance', 'collaborative arts' and 'theatre'. In some recent instances, though, it has *helped* to work across categories and between disciplines. Southern Arts, for instance, reported that they operated "a cross-artform 'new work' fund which includes 'temporary and site specific work' in its list of eligible projects".²⁵ And Moving Being Theatre Company have found that working site-specifically has enabled them to target certain alternative pockets of funding, particularly those that are interested in promoting a cross-over between the categories of art and science. Here, the cross-over can be achieved not only through performance content but also by working in, and from, scientific institutions (in Moving Being's case an example has been the National Botanic Library of Wales). IOU's feeling that "there is more interest in site specific work at the moment" might be reinforced by the recent Year of the Artist scheme, run by Arts2000 through the Regional Arts Boards between June 2000 and May 2001. The scheme invited proposals for "innovative new work for spaces and places throughout the UK, focusing on everyday areas where artistic activities don't usually happen or appear"²⁶ and was open to artists working in any form or discipline. Ten of the companies and solo artist represented in this survey created work as part of the Year of the Artist.²⁷ Sue Palmer, whose *Hair Raising* project was one such commission, comments that completing the application for funding was "for the first time an enjoyable experience, one where the idea fits the project guidelines without compromise".

In some instances the means of funding for site-specific performance has varied from that for theatre-based performance because it has focused on different aspects of the work: site-specificity's intervention into everyday spaces has meant that its effect might be harnessed and put into the service of social and political concerns and issues of community. An example of one aspect of this shift in focus is drawn from the work of Kneehigh:

The Landscape Theatre shows are not in themselves pieces of community theatre – the main cast, direction, design, are professional Kneehigh artists – but they will be strongly influenced by the culture, concerns, characteristics of the community in which they take place. The shows serve as a public platform for a broad programme of training and work in

the community, and as such receive funding through trusts and funding bodies who support training young people, community rejuvenation, the environment. Funding secured for the site specific work therefore tends to be less about funding the art itself, and more about the vast process behind it.

15 February 2002 – interview with David Wheeler

Founded in 1976, IOU Theatre is well-known for its visually-stunning, highly physical work, with its practice combining large-scale site-specific events, street theatre, installation, and touring indoor and outdoor theatre shows. As artistic director, David Wheeler is one of three permanent employees (along with a producer and an administrator); the company draws on a pool of up to 24 (usually regular) associates for performances.

An IOU publication outlines the company's site-specific work: "Disused houses, market-halls, canal basins and railway sidings have provided the setting for special commissions. IOU has performed on beaches and mudflats [and] in castles, catacombs and courtyards. The physical nature of the space affects the imagery which arises and there is great scope for mixing illusion with reality [and] for playing with distance, height and scale". Of the many such performances created over the years, Wheeler refers in the interview particularly to Eye Witness (2001; video installation at Tramway, Glasgow), Cure (2000 and 2001; Dean Clough Mill, Halifax, and Upper Campfield Market, Manchester), and The House (1982; residential house in London).

Since 1984, IOU has been based at Dean Clough Mills in Halifax, Yorkshire – a disused cotton mill that in 1983 was opened as an arts complex. In a 1996 speech urging the imaginative reuse of thousands of redundant industrial buildings, the Prince of Wales spoke of Dean Clough Mills as one of the triumphs that other such schemes might follow. A part of this space – the underground, "catacomb-like" viaduct – was explored as the site for IOU's 2000 production of Cure. It was in this extended context that I met David Wheeler, recording the interview in the IOU office at Dean Clough Mills.

The survey highlights one avenue of funding (and therefore an opportunity for creating work) that presents itself only for site-specific performance. Many artists receive commissions from site-owners or controllers – that is, by people who would not normally commission theatre work, for spaces that would not normally see this work (more than two-thirds (30) of the 44 respondents have been commissioned in this way, usually on more than one occasion). The majority of commissions have come from councils (of towns, cities and rural areas), but commissioners also include organizations such as English Heritage, the National Trust, universities and retail chains. Performance is thereby used as a vehicle for site promotion. Not all respondents, however, have had this experience of creating work, and they report

differing experiences of negotiating space (Kneehigh: “if anything, the company tends to have to fight for the right to use a site, pointing out the mutual benefits to the controller”; Storm Theatre Company: “We usually approach a site/site controller and negotiate with them. They are usually delighted to have their space used and are invariably very helpful”). It is worth noting, also, that the funding avenue provided by such commissions may not be altogether a good thing. It may be that arts funding bodies will prioritize other work over site-specific performance, assuming that the latter has access to alternative sources of funding. This would effect an extension of Cerberus Theatre Company’s assertion that “there is an awkward balance between arts specific funding and community/local authority funding that becomes more of an issue with site specific work”.

Site-specific performance, it seems, locates itself at the intersection of a number of territories (those of, for instance, tourism, town planning, art, community, and social control) and it has therefore provoked new questions about how and by whom the work should be funded. These questions will find new answers as the territory of the site-specific continues to be re-defined.

III. Naming

“...a real location...”

“... ‘*found*’ spaces...”

“...in tune with a site...”

“...*Made to measure*...”

“...listening to the space...”

“...*once-off, time based and non-theatrical*...”

“...a spirit of place that exists beyond and before the event...”²⁸

The practice of mapping has always been intricately connected with that of naming, as Brian Friel makes us painfully aware in his 1980 play, *Translations*. In the current context, however, questions of naming are absolutely central to the field being mapped, as practitioners find that their choice of terms can signal a place in theatre genealogies as well as a particular kind of relationship to other performance practices. In this study I have made the decision to use the label ‘site-specific’ (though similar terms such as ‘site-based’ are often adopted in current academic contexts); as I indicated in the introduction, the term not only references particular disciplinary

discourses that I have found it useful to draw upon but also raises productive theoretical questions of definition. But, in practical terms, what do performance-makers mean by 'site'? And how specific is site-specific?

The only generalization that can be drawn from the attempts within the questionnaire to define site-specific performance is that it is concerned with issues of place and the 'real' spaces of performance. Whether or not this is precisely its primary concern is a point of debate. Within these broad parameters, the general feeling is that we are dealing exclusively with non-theatre spaces.²⁹ Brighton-based performance and installation company Red Earth encapsulate the essence of many of the definitions when they suggest that site-specific performance is "inspired by and designed to integrate with the physical and non-physical aspects of a specific location". Integration, however, may be less a motivation than exploration, intervention, disruption or interrogation. The main features of site-specific performance that recur throughout the responses might be summarized as follows:

- use of non-theatre locations ('found spaces');
- influence of site in the creation of the performance;
- notion of 'address' – that the performance addresses the site in some way, whether working 'with' it, reacting 'against' it or locating itself somewhere between these polar positions.

The overriding issue of contention arising from the survey turns around the question 'can site-specific performance tour?'; it is a question that might more explicitly be phrased 'does 'site-specific' imply 'site-exclusive'?'. The responses are divided almost exactly in half between those who believe that site-specific performance can tour (often with qualifications – Impossible Theatre, for instance, believe that "it can – with care. Obviously it loses something, but also can perhaps carry something else away with it") and those for whom the notion of touring such work is a paradox. It seems that there are two ways of dealing with this. The first is to draw distinctions between levels of site-specificity:

Some projects are completely site-specific, i.e. they could not take place anywhere else without losing a strong thread of meaning and connection; while other more flexible projects may work around a certain sense of

place, i.e. the spirit or concept at the heart of the project would work in several – but not all – locations.

(Red Earth)

Bill Aitchison and the Whalley Range All Stars are respondents who also offer two definitions in this way. Similarly, Justin Mckeown distinguishes between the site-specificity of up to half of his work (which is “directly derived from a chosen site”) and the more general way in which all of his work “takes into account the inherent meanings within the site”.

Paul Pinson, artistic director of Scottish company Boilerhouse, agrees; he too makes distinctions between types or levels of engagement with the performance space. Boilerhouse work does sometimes tour but, as Pinson points out,

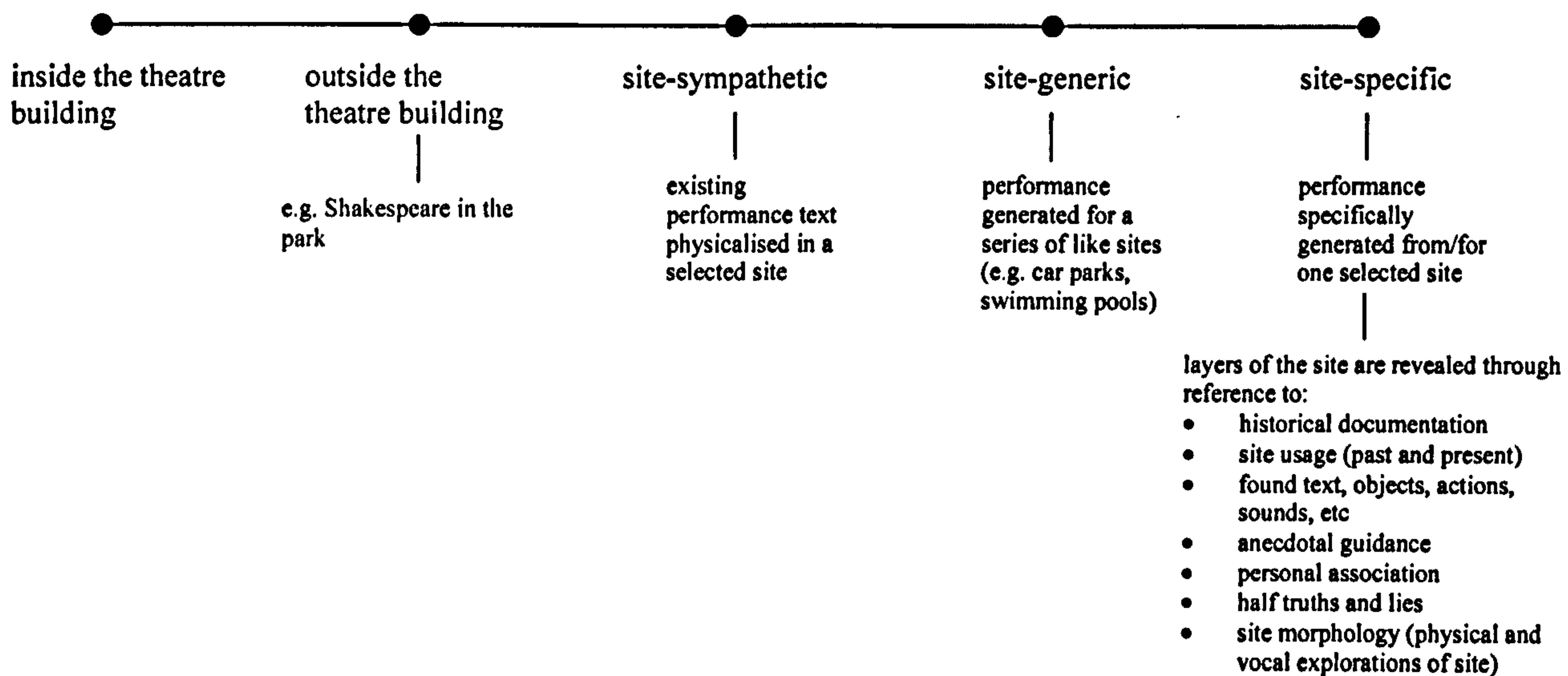
that’s not pure site specificity. You can recreate a work in response to a number of differing sites, which is totally valid in itself and is an element of site specificity but is different from making a piece of work in response to one specific site.

This raises the issue of ‘purity’: can we distil a *pure* model of site-specificity, with which other, related, practices might also be illuminated? Such an approach would recognize the validity of each performative response to place while acknowledging the ways in which it differs from the ‘pure model’, as Helena Goldwater argues:

To make a truly site-specific piece means it sits wholly in that site in both its content and form, otherwise, if movable, it becomes more about the site as a vehicle/vessel. I don’t think this matters but it must be considered.

The second way of dealing with the complexities arising from the issue of touring is to create a new terminology.³⁰ Wrights & Sites, for example, propose a possible continuum within which to locate a variety of theatre practices in terms of their relationships to place.³¹

This scale reserves the label ‘site-specific’ only for performances in which a profound engagement with one site is absolutely central to both the creation and execution of the work (these performances work with and from one site, do not tour and do not perform pre-existing scripts), and suggests new labels to distinguish other theatrical experiments with non-theatre spaces.



This still leaves the question of what to do with those performances that seem to fall somewhere between the ‘site-generic’ and ‘site-specific’ points on the scale. I am referring to that set of work that is not so much *toured* as *relocated*: re-worked to fit each new site. Many of the practitioners in the survey produce work in this manner. Gregg Whelan, of the live art partnership Lone Twin, argues that their work does not tour “in a ‘repeating’ way” but rather that “the concerns of the work are recontextualized for a particular environment”. And Bill Aitchison comments on moving a show to different sites: “each rendition was different but they all were most intimate with the sites. I would not unleash a performance indiscriminately upon a site ignoring what could arise from the meeting of these two strangers”. For some, this kind of touring or relocating has an enriching effect on the work: it “radically expands concepts” of site-specificity (Bobby Baker) and “allows for a constantly changing dynamic in the performance” (Theatre Nomad). Further questions ensue from this discussion. If a performance is re-worked, to what extent can it then be said to be the ‘same’ performance? And, perhaps more importantly, at which stage would we agree that a performance has been adapted *enough* to retain the label ‘site-specific’?

This last question resonates on a more pragmatic level, as there are important issues of funding, and therefore of time, involved in how much each performance is able to

be worked and re-worked for a particular space. IOU discuss this problem in relation to a recent production:

Cure is touring, we wanted to have a core performance element that could be taken to and informed by new sites; in practice this has been very difficult – impossible really as there simply is not enough money to re-work shows in relation to the specific site. There are very few promoters who can pay the costs of creating work on that scale.

FW: I know you haven't always worked exclusively in urban environments. Do you respond fundamentally differently to urban and rural locations?

DW: I don't know. That probably answers the question: probably 'no' is the answer. I mean, I think being based here in West Yorkshire (in the Halifax area, which has a very particular character in itself) has probably influenced us quite a lot, in the sense that it is a very unusual mixture of sort of moorland landscape – wild, uninhabited landscape – semi-inhabited areas, and then very industrial pockets. I think that combination of us living in what 20-odd years ago was very a run-down industrial area mixed with stunningly beautiful countryside means that we straddle two concepts quite subconsciously, I guess. I think we take the same impetus to all locations, because it's already a combined notion within us.

FW: So perhaps given IOU's context, a stark contrast that's usually set up between the urban and the rural doesn't really apply any more?

DW: Possibly, or it's possibly there all the time. The contrast is something which we deal with all the time, so I think probably in a sense if we're in an urban landscape we'll try to bring something of the contrast of a rural, pastoral context, and vice versa.

FW: Petra, your approach to rural and urban sites seems to connect with the distinction you make between 'primary' and 'secondary' spaces: those that one makes a special journey to and those that one passes through on the way to other places.

PK: Yes, there are some things that I'm very conscious of when I'm working in a city that are very different from working in a rural environment. In a rural environment I often work with the group for the group: there's no audience. Or the only audience is the 'found audience', if you like, like the fishermen walking by. When I work in the city the process is very different, and I think the main difference for me is the idea of the distracted imagination, the flaneur. The flaneur is very much associated for me with the city: someone who passes by, who only gives some attention to things. So the work that I've tried to do in cities is very often what I would call en passant: minor, not major.

As a postscript to this discussion of touring, I want to point to Manchester-based company Walk the Plank, whose practice complicates the issue still further. Their work might be divided into two categories: celebratory performance that is commissioned individually for each site and community, and performances created on

board the company's ship, making use of its physical features as well as the stories it might inspire.³² In the latter category, "our site can tour, in effect". The company write that

the ship tours, and we like the fact that we can exercise some control over the site (we can control what happens on board, but the environment in which the ship is berthed changes from seaside harbour to working dock).

Walk the Plank are keenly aware of the ramifications of the waterfront regeneration projects of the 'eighties and 'nineties and feel that "as artists we should be working in places of change and the biggest transformations have been happening in waterside locations – with derelict docks being reclaimed etc". Where, in this case, do we draw the boundaries marking the performance site? Is the site wholly contained in the ship, or is it extended differently and with fresh implications each time the boat docks?

Given the level of debate surrounding its application, we might begin to question the usefulness of the term 'site-specific'. Despite Grid Iron's assertion that "there does seem to be a general increase in the public awareness of what site-specific theatre is", many answers implied that the term 'site-specific' might be explained, or replaced with something more appropriate, when describing the work to those outside of the performance profession, particularly audiences.³³ This aims to "reduc[e] uneasiness about what [spectators] will experience" (IOU), often because, as Lone Twin point out, "site is a word that sits a little oddly outside performance discourse". The phrases replacing 'site-specific' in these situations tend to be either a more detailed description of that company's particular approach ("live animation of objects within a site" – PickleHerring Theatre³⁴), or a way of playing on the novelty of the site-specific encounter as a popular selling point ("Wrap up warm, and join us on an unforgettable journey as the magnificent Ludlow Castle tells its story of love and betrayal" – Pentabus Theatre³⁵). Other terms used include:

- context-sensitive;
- environmental art;
- outdoor performance;
- interactive;
- Landscape Theatre;
- installation;

- season-specific;
- public;
- promenade;
- contextually reactive;
- street theatre;
- place-orientated work;
- square pegs in square holes;
- one-off specially commissioned performance;
- made specially for

Sue Palmer makes an important point when she suggests that “by using other words you help to define the thing for yourself and to stretch and understand its meaning on many levels”.

IV. Witnessing

A different kind of map is created when its point of reference is not the practitioner but the spectator or rather, as here, the particular decisions made by the practitioner in respect of the spectator. Though this may begin from quite simplistic notions of accessibility, it also rehearses questions of identity and interpretation that are taken up in more depth in Chapter Six.

Discussing street theatre, Bim Mason has argued that “the purpose of doing theatre on the streets is to reach people who are unfamiliar with theatre”; he goes on to note that “the vast majority of outdoor theatre is intended to be attractive and accessible to an audience far wider than those who visit indoor theatres” (Mason 1992: 13).

FW: In discussing the categories of the rural and the urban, we have perhaps been implicitly discussing political notions of space, and the ways in which sites might be politicized differently through a variety of performative approaches.

DW: I don't think we're very often accused of working politically in the ideas. Not that there's anything wrong with that: I think in one sense it's fundamentally political, but to be pinned down to one particular idea just wipes any kind of magic out of the work you've done.

FW: So any problems you have with defining the work politically have to do with a reluctance to limit the possible interpretations of a site and the resulting performance.

DW: Probably I have more interest when the sites are slightly ambiguous, so they are sculptural rather than having a very definite identity which you then have to work either with or against, one way or another.

FW: In what ways, then, might site-specificity be understood to be 'fundamentally political'?

PK: All of my work is site-specific in terms of the physical site but also in terms of the peopled site. I think that's quite important – that there's a peopled site, a community site. That there are hierarchies, narratives, politics, myths... Every work I do has a political agenda. I think that working with a specific site, working with the environment that people live in, helps them to articulate some of the tensions between, for instance, images of madness and one's own experiences.

FW: Clifford, though you've mentioned that your work is very definitely "politicized (or, if there was a word, 'culturized') in all kinds of ways", much of your recent practice seems interested in preserving a range of possible interpretations of the performance site.

CM: I'm no longer convinced by those early and simpler 'hand in glove' relationships – those notions of 'suitability' – because I think that attitude presumes that at this place there are certain clear meanings and no others. And I think [in Tri Bywyd] we generated a much more complicated and troubled relationship which really excited me.

FW: I'm interested in how the relationship between an overtly political agenda and a poetics of the space is worked through in performance. For instance, some of The Olimpias' work is concerned with the physical 'blueprinting' of a site and the social implications of this, but...

PK: What I'm not interested in is the kind of 'guilt' performance: "hey, I can't get in there". All of The Olimpias' shows deal with seduction, pleasure and play. That's very important to the work we do, so it's not a reductionist understanding of political performance which just shows up something that might be wrong. What we're trying to create is something that seduces you and draws you in. So we create play around places. We create a different map, a different form of being in a site, in a very playful manner.

While it is important to remember that the categories of 'street theatre' and 'site-specific theatre' overlap but are by no means synonymous, and that we are discussing indoor as well as outdoor non-theatre venues, Mason does touch here on an area of interest to many site-specific practitioners. More than two thirds of the companies and solo artists surveyed identified 'reaching a wider audience' as a reason for working in the site-specific mode.³⁶ For some, it is the primary reason. London Bubble's artistic policy, for example, states that their "main objective is to attract new users to theatre and to provide appropriate entry points for this to happen". They aim

“to work particularly with and for people who do not normally have access to theatre for geographical, financial or cultural reasons”.³⁷ Similarly, Theatre Nomad “are politically committed to the development of new audiences and to reaching as wide an audience as possible”. Theatre Nomad’s belief that “it is easier to do this outside of a traditional theatre environment” is shared by many, perhaps because of site-specificity’s implied relationship to practices of theatre-going.

“Do you go to the theater often?” That many have never gone, and that those who have, even in countries with established theater traditions, are going elsewhere or, with cable and VCRs, staying home, is also a theatrical fact, a datum of practice.

(Blau 1992: 76)

In the context of site-specific performance, Blau’s question ‘do you go to the theatre often?’ becomes blurred. The site-based work reminds us that one need not ‘go to the theatre’ (in terms of the theatre building, together with all the cultural implications of the process of ‘going to the theatre’) in order to see or even become part of a theatrical performance. The spectator happening upon a performance in a public space may not even put the two experiences in the same category.

So site-specific performance may create an audience that doesn’t know it is one, that “has no idea there is going to be art there and come[s] across it by accident” (Miriam Keye). Its sought-after ‘wider audience’ might alternatively plan to attend the event, attracted precisely by the removal of the theatre building, simultaneously removing the “preconception about what type of people ‘theatre-goers’ are” (Grid Iron) along with the “red curtains, spotlights, blank verse, laughter, darkness” that Peter Brook found “confusedly superimposed” on the image of theatre (Brook 1996: 9). But to what extent is this wider audience actually found? In 1993 Alan Read felt that the mounting interest in site-specific performance had not in fact engendered a new audience for the work.

Currently there is renewed experiment internationally with ‘non-theatre’ spaces, significantly the architecture of the industrial period, reconditioned for a ‘new theatre to meet a new public’. New theatre there may well be, but the identity of the audience continues to confirm the suspicion that the ‘old public’ is simply willing to travel further to see what it has always wanted – good theatre.

(Read 1993: 4-5)

This introduces the sense of a collective audience identity (the ‘old public’), a knowing audience that constructs itself appropriately as an interpretative body via a cumulative framework of contemporary performance experiences. A series of questions follows from this notion: how is an audience’s sense of its identity and role created? what are the possibilities for this identity to be altered? and how might new and multiple audience identities be accommodated?

Later in the decade Jan Cohen-Cruz also questioned whether the removal of the theatre-building, this time in the context of street theatre, really does open the work up to a new public.

Space is always controlled by *someone* and exists *somewhere*, so is inevitably marked by a particular class or race and not equally accessible to everyone. ... While the mobility of much street performance facilitates the seeking out of diverse audiences, one must question if access to a broader audience really is a difference between performance in the street and in theatre buildings.

(Cohen-Cruz 1998: 2)

Clearly, whether the site-specific mode can indeed reach the wider audience that many of its practitioners seek will depend on the type of site used, on issues of accessibility, cultural and social positioning, and on the terms in which the experience is couched. London-based theatre company The Lion’s Part aim to “escape from the bureaucracy of the theatre building” by ensuring that their sites “are free in access”; in monetary terms, too, “our events are free. Theatre is a part of the event, and the sites part of the pleasure as they bring new and unsuspecting audiences!”. This use of the description ‘event’ is indicative of a trend across the field of site-specific performance and reflected in the survey responses. The notion of the event, in this use, is not intended to invoke the kinds of gravity and wide-reaching, complex signification discussed by Steinberg and Kear in their analysis of Diana’s death as ‘event’ (1999). Rather, it moves away from the highbrow associations of the theatre and closer to reaching a public well-versed in the popular culture of gigs, festivals and celebrations. It emphasizes the significance of the spatial encounter and is conceived as a ‘whole’ experience for the spectator.

CM: There's a set of negotiations that takes place, and I think in that relationship between the Host, the Ghost and the Witness in this extended thing that I define as 'The Work' there is a mass of opportunities for resonances, for atmospheres, for the delivery of information in entirely new contexts: it's poetically a very rich form. And I think it can and does – and I've seen it happen – rewrite the contract between the audience and the work.

FW: This potential we're discussing in site-specificity seems to be another slant on a set of enquiries that have been posed in a range of experimental performance and live art practices since the late 1960s. There are echoes of such enquiries in, for example, the assertion on The Olimpias website of a focus on 'creating new encounters between performers and spectators'.

PK: It all has happened before, lots of times. [But] there is a different form of engagement. I do find that what happens in site-specific work is that the scripts are not as firm. What I'm very interested in is choreographing spectators' experience not only of the site but also of other people.

FW: Your use of that dance-based idea – choreography – begins to suggest that we might find distinct versions of the site-specific by looking to the disciplines that influence each particular approach. Clifford McLucas, for example, has talked of searching for appropriate 'architectures' for his performance work, and David Wheeler emphasizes a sculptural rather than narrative process. In fact IOU's way of developing site-specific pieces draws on a depth of ideas created through a series of small-scale works in a number of different forms, including installation.

DW: We did a video installation in the autumn at the Tramway in Glasgow called Eye Witness. It was five huge cubes and inside there was life-size projection of five different incidents all involving people in some kind of mortal danger. The next site-specific show will probably be called Providence, and it will be a development from that idea.

FW: The implications for the spectator here I find fascinating. The video installation puts the audience into the position of witness and, depending on the site that is chosen for the site-specific piece, there might be the possibility to implicate the audience in a number of new ways.

DW: Yes, that was very much in our minds when we thought of Eye Witness – because the projections are life-size and you're very close to them, so there is a play with voyeurism and your own helplessness and responsibility. Not that we would say that in any publicity! But it's an interesting thing to play with. And then that might develop, as you say, in terms of how you implicate the audience in seeing things which might be happening live, or versions of that. It's interesting but also terrifying.

While the term 'event' is widely used, The Lion's Part's experience of accessibility cannot apply to all site-specific performance. Each site, whether outdoors or indoors, restricts or encourages access to varying degrees. In some cases there may be two separate audiences: the paying, knowing audience, and the unsuspecting, accidental audience that, for Bill Aitchison, "adds to the complexity of the event". Grid Iron's

Decky Does a Bronco, for instance, was performed in a series of playgrounds; although audience paid admission, director Ben Harrison remarks that the children who had claimed each playground as territory were not shut out from or charged admission to the public space. He recalls that, in groups, they would approach the performance area intermittently, when things looked interesting, retreating to other parts of the park during “the boring bits”. Grid Iron’s experience in general has been “that we do get a new audience, people that, for one reason or another, haven’t gone to the theatre before”. Kneehigh, too, find that the site-specific process creates a new audience:

The work in the community behind the Landscape Theatre really does take the theatre to a new audience, whether their involvement has been as audience only, steward, making, technical, music or performance. The Clay District is economically poor, and theatre would not normally be a major concern for the majority of the village communities there. In *Hell’s Mouth* last summer, bikers from the area performed the English/Cornish skirmishes in the Mad-Max style Cornwall of the future. This, and the sort of involvement previously listed and reasonable ticket prices encouraged a strong local percentage of audience, who would not normally see the company’s work or theatre of any sort.

Here, the encounter with a new audience seems to be linked to the fact that, for Kneehigh, “a sense of the immediate locality, culture, concerns and character is inherent in the work”.

This leads us on to a related discussion, which has to do with the community of a site. The practice of The Olimpias is frequently concerned with political issues of site ownership and re-interpretation, particularly dealing with disability. For Petra Kuppers, site-specific performance is “attentive to the local community and its ways of inhabiting its environment”. The company “work with the community to take new forms of ownership of site, re-interpret the site, keep its history and presence alive”. The work of Wrights & Sites, similarly, is “above all ... *interested* in the place and in the people who meet us in that place”.³⁸ Fittingly for a practice that might trace some of its roots to community theatre traditions, site-specific performance often approaches its sites as *lived spaces*, working to a greater or lesser extent with or for those who inhabit them. One of the first companies to use this process, Welfare State International have always prioritized “a commitment to drawing in local energies and leaving behind a residue of skills and confidence after the company’s withdrawal”

(Coult & Kershaw 1983: 9), and in 1983 they extended this work when they settled permanently in Ulverston, Cumbria. The company popularized the idea of celebratory performance, a mode also practised by some of the other artists in the survey, including Emergency Exit Arts, The Lion's Part and Walk the Plank. Bim Mason writes of Welfare State that

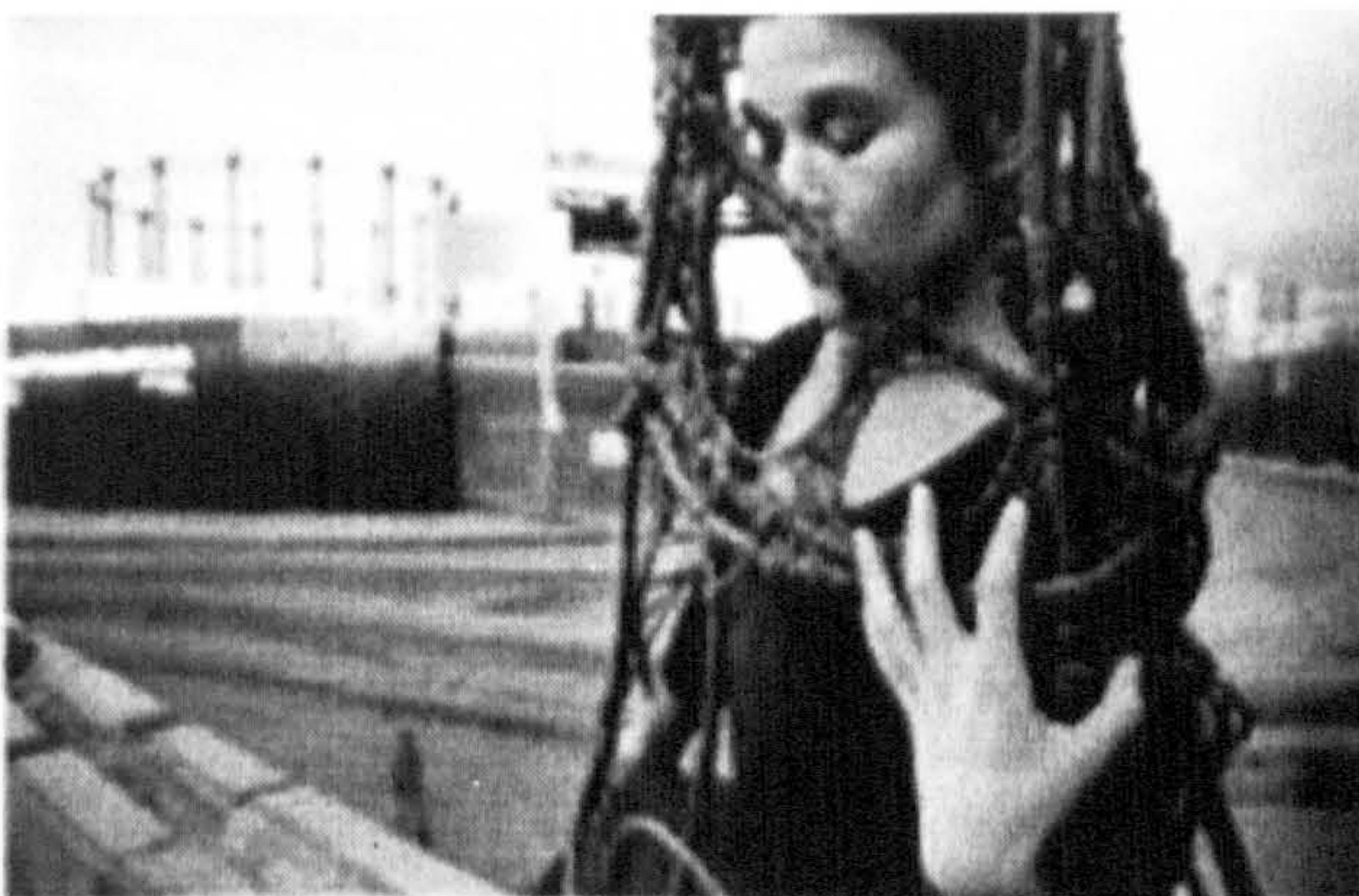
their shows could be said to be audience-specific as well as site-specific. They devise their performances from the local culture, both historical and contemporary. ... all the ingredients are designed to be appropriate to the particular site, the whole area and the specific audience.

(Mason 1992: 137)

The development of the artistic residency, which “blossomed in the 1970s and 80s” (Stephens 2000: 14), might also be said to create ‘audience-specific’ work. The Year of the Artist scheme, referred to above, established 980 residencies in everyday sites across England, defining residency as “an artist, or group of artists, in any art form, working in, or responding to, a particular place or context” (Capaldi & Chadbourn 2001: 33). These residencies took place in sites such as work places and retail settings, heritage sites and city parks, schools and hospitals, airports and train stations, and in many cases the creative process was as much ‘the work’ as any final outcome. This notion of process also gains new importance in other examples of site-related work. ‘Escaping’ the theatre building often means escaping the rehearsal room, and, if a performance is to be created from and in a public place, a fluid and provisional audience is formed. As Carolyn Deby, of the dance company Sirens Crossing (Figure 2), finds: “a by-product of having your creation process exposed to passers-by is that

they feel empowered to comment, to ask questions, to have an opinion... and, ultimately, to attend the actual performances”.

Figure 2: Sirens Crossing, *City:Skinned* (2002)



Deby also reminds us that the challenge in site-specific work is not only to attract a wider audience but to enable this audience to have a

“radically different relationship” to the performance. Potential new relationships might be explored through “degrees of scale, intimacy, proximity... the possibility of the audience member moving through or past the performance... the lack of usual theatrical conventions... the challenge to focus the viewer’s eye without the usual tricks...”.

FW: I know that you’ve been involved in the processes of documentation. A range of questions are raised in this form of response to site-specific performance: what is it that you’re documenting?

CM: Heaven knows! There are a number of problems with trying to get a piece of work like Tri Bywyd onto the pages of a book. One is that the page-by-page turning of the book is a very particular act, you know, it’s kind of like moving through time but not quite, as opposed to something like this, which is a kind of like a codex ... [and he folds out in front of us a document from his current ‘deep mapping’ project in the Netherlands].

FW: But this is how you suggested that your documentation of Tri Bywyd should be read.

CM: That’s right, I’m very interested in the codex. Early bindings of books and religious texts allowed you to either open the text page by page or, if the occasion allowed, to actually open the thing up as a long fold-out ‘concertina’. Now, I liked the possibility that my pages in Nick’s book³⁹ could be converted by the person who owned the book into the ‘real’ document. In other words, when we have academic books we often go away and photocopy them and use them in our essays or whatever. I thought it would be very exciting if that act of photocopying really was an act of authorship, in a way, and so I invited people first of all to photocopy all of those pages and to paste them together into one continuous document: then would be revealed the ‘real’ or ‘authentic’ documentation that I had wanted to make. So the documentation doesn’t exist in the book and I think then the notions of authenticity, of documentation and of authorship are opened up in a lively way.

FW: I want to pick up on the significance here of authenticity, because it seems that this is a problematic value implied in much of the debate around theatre documentation.

CM: It’s interesting to introduce the technologies of documentation back into the work. Regarding this question of documentation, even at the time of the event, I don’t think I could simply describe what’s actually happening. And I think that this predicament endlessly undermines the possibility for the record or the document, but it does also return us to the notion of the prime authenticity of the live event as being somehow the essential and central ‘holy grail’ of it all, and I really object to that! So the idea of moving these technologies back into the work, for me, proliferates the so-called authenticities within live performance in ways which are very exciting.

V. Shaping

Maps *shape* our understanding of space, locating and fixing not only landmarks but also key relationships between their topographical, symbolic and linguistic elements. Here, in the final map of the chapter, the metaphor of cartography serves to draw our attention to the similar processes of shaping carried out by performance, as it negotiates between inside and outside spaces, and between situated and imported texts, images, physicalities and narratives.

The survey results suggest that contemporary British site-specific performance is almost twice as likely to take place outdoors as indoors.⁴⁰ Eight of the practitioners produce 100% outdoor productions, compared to three producing 100% indoor work, and 12 respondents report that the balance in their work is roughly even. But, as Gaston Bachelard reminds us, outside and inside are unstable categories, “always ready to be reversed” (1994: 218). Some of the practitioners felt unable to answer this question, because they frequently move between outdoor and indoor spaces in one production.

Another category that appears unstable in much current performance work is that of text. How are we to define this, in the context of ‘text-based performance’? This question becomes especially significant when dealing with work that “include[s] song lyric as text”, “has a created text but utilizes non-textual work also”, includes text but is “not text led”, or “may have words, music or poetry within [it]”. In the questionnaire I had used the phrase ‘text-based performance’ to indicate scripted work, but, as Lone Twin point out, “work that has no readable paged-based writing in it could be understood as being textually driven”. The scripting or non-scripting of performance text is an issue that continues to gain significance in contemporary performance; that is, do spoken words count as text? Does song? Are we looking for text used as a starting point or text that is utilized in other ways and at other stages of the work? And site-specific performance finds its own texts. The issue is therefore complicated further when practitioners begin to refer to the ‘texts’ of a place (see, for example, Etchells 1999). New texts might also merge with a place as a result of performance; The Olimpias, for example, create a text through their work that “becomes part of the site (chalk on roads, leaflets on the ground, traces in clay...)”.

Part of this issue has to do with the general acceptance of the metaphor ‘performance text’ (where current scholarly usage allows us to talk of ‘reading’ an image, a movement or a sound in the same way as we might read a book), making it difficult to pinpoint the connotations of the word ‘text’ with any clarity.⁴¹

The various relationships between text, site and performance that are represented in the survey results have less to do with issues of site-specificity than with the mode of work itself: scripted plays, devised work, dance, performance art. In the few cases where there is a difference in the relationship to text between the theatre-based and site-specific work of one practitioner, the site-specific work is “perhaps less likely to be text based” (Impossible Theatre). The reasons given for this refer to the practicalities of performing in the open air or in a site with the distractions of the everyday. Kneehigh, for instance, report that their “Landscape Theatre form uses text sparingly – words do not travel over distances or in strong winds”.

The responses to the survey begin to build a picture of how a performance of place is constructed and of those tools that might be most significant to this construction. In the vast majority of cases (36 of 44) the site-specific process allows the site to inform both the form and content of the work, though the discussion surrounding this area suggests that a very broad generalization might be made, asserting that live art and dance practices are more likely to draw on a site for their form and theatre practices for their content. In many cases, a thematic engagement is deemed less necessary (or, in one or two instances, less desirable) than a geometric or structural one in order for a piece to be termed site-specific.

We attempt to respond to the physical qualities of the site. The work includes a large proportion of movement, dance and physical theatre, so this tends to develop in this way. The influence on content is far less direct and not even through each piece. In general we try to ‘dream’ the site rather than interpret it literally.

(Storm Theatre)

There are, of course, many different ways of responding to a site’s physical aspects. Dance practitioners may derive a new ‘movement language’ from the sites in which they work, but the nature of their work often means that practical considerations are paramount: certain types of movement become impossible if, for example, a site

presents unsprung floors. Such physical restrictions also affect performance in other disciplines: Station House Opera, for instance, often fly performers into and around the space, and so they seek out sites which have the height to enable this movement. Performance form may develop, then, as a means of dealing with the perceived shortcomings of a site. Alternatively, the physicality of the site might offer “different stimuli elements” to the creation process as “experimentation with playing spaces and the different audience interaction elements that suit each space provide fresh perspectives for working” (Riptide). A number of the companies producing scripted performance (including Cotton Grass Theatre Company and Pentabus Theatre Company) commission the script for a particular location, thus allowing the space into the foundations of the work. This might involve the performative use of a site’s natural rhythms, as Pentabus found when preparing for their performance of *Shot Through the Heart* at Ludlow Castle:

discussions began with the scenographer, who talked about natural lighting, and specifically the movement from daylight through dusk to night. This corresponded to space in the castle. The large open grassy outer space seemed ideal for daytime... As dusk fell act two began and the audience and the captured tribes were led into the castle by a bunch of mercenary soldiers. As the audience entered the castle a threatening drumming replaced the melodies of the first act – here the castle was used as a sound box, its acoustics creating resonance. ... Act three was text based, again using the natural acoustic of the castle... Here the text was complex too, and drew much inspiration from the replacement of melody by rhythm in the new culture of the story, and from the natural darkness by which we were surrounded.⁴²

Space has tended to exert a different kind of influence on the development of performance *content*, an influence more often abstract and imaginative than purely literal. A site brings its historical, cultural or political implications, which are then woven with other concerns and aesthetics into the final piece. This process may be either explicit, as in Bobby Baker’s *Kitchen Show*,⁴³ or implicit, as for Fragments and Monuments, who

bring their own stories to the site. The site is used in an abstract way and not as an illustration of a narrative. We look for spaces that can be transformed into something unexpected. We project our own reality onto the locations.

A number of artists find themselves considering the politics of ‘projecting’ onto a site, either metaphorically, as here, or literally, as in Pentabus’s *Shot Through the Heart* (in which video was “projected directly on to the massive castle walls”).

There is some thinking that you cannot import anything into a site-specific work that is not in the site already. Yet you import yourself, your imagination, your senses, ideas, so I think you can import other objects. However, a site can easily push away objects that are imported and attention must always be paid to the intention behind importation. This is part of the very fine line that makes a production or performance able to be transient and to exist away from the site.

(Sue Palmer)

Palmer here sets up a debate between what is brought into a site and what is already there, representing a choice that will begin to establish a particular relationship between performance and site. Cathy Turner of *Wrights & Sites* finds that “a work can be more or less aggressive in its assertion of itself within the space” and prefers to work with an idea of performance that “may be no more than a set of footprints in the sand”. The notion of ‘building into’ or ‘dressing’ a space, adding to it as part of a performance, might be an attempt to create a stage environment within the location, thereby reducing the physical aspects of that location available to be worked with, but it might alternatively offer “an interesting way of responding to and interrogating the space” (Storm).

So what does site-specific performance look like? It is a question that can only be answered with reference to what it *has* looked like in its various manifestations.

In recent years it has looked like...

- IOU’s *Island* (1996) – commissioned as part of Copenhagen ‘96, Europe’s City of Culture celebrations, this show explored the theme of earth and was presented within the old city ramparts and moat.
- Anne-Marie Culhane’s *Night Sky* (1997) – a visual arts work commissioned for and made in response to Rothwell Colliery, involving the

Figure 3: Wrights & Sites, *The Quay Thing* (1998)



posting of the work through every tenth letter box on the site: “we never knew what the impact was”.

- Wrights & Sites’s *The Quay Thing* (1998; Figure 3) – a season of six performances presented at different locations on Exeter Quayside. The locations ranged from public to private, from open access to closed and inaccessible: the former municipal power station, the empty maritime museum, a medieval bridge, a condemned boatyard.⁴⁴
- The Whalley Range All Stars’s *Day of the Dummy* (1999) – commissioned by Marks & Spencer for a store in Covent Garden, this piece involved six living mannequins animating the shop floor and streets outside throughout one day.
- Sirens Crossing’s *Trace and Flight* (2000) – a two-part piece exploring two very different public sites (Abney Park Cemetery in Stoke Newington and the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank) through choreography and live, original music, each part linked conceptually and leading the audience on a journey through the spaces.
- Kneehigh’s *Roger Salmon – Cornish Detective: The Case of the Uncertain Woman* (2001) – a performance in Geevor Mine, Pendeen, Cornwall, in which, the advertising leaflet tells us, “the walls whisper their own memories. As the audience descends through the old mine buildings they and the journey itself unravel this seemingly impossible case”.

Site-specific performance engages with site as symbol, site as story-teller, site as structure. As performance continues to find new ways of engaging with its sites, new reasons for moving out of the theatre building and new ways of forging relationships with its audiences, the maps created here will be re-drawn, their boundaries re-assessed and their meanings re-negotiated. Their contours and landmarks are held in an uneasy relationship to the spaces of Chapter One’s preliminary excursions, thereby providing a form of orientation that is as interested in the gaps between these modes as in the discoveries that they themselves might seem to enable. Part Two of the thesis orientates itself in relation to the critical and empirical tactics of the excursion *and* the map, in a series of explorations that are specifically located at the same time as they are *out of place*.

Notes:

- ¹ The process of mapping itself has been used as a productive strategy in making site-specific performance; see for example Wrights & Sites 2003 and Pearson & Shanks 2001: 64-66.
- ² On this point, an interesting remark was made in the questionnaire response of Rotozaza, a company that has produced work in Italy as well as Britain. Core company member Anthony Hampton writes that "the term 'site specific' doesn't exist in Italy yet. No-one I spoke to knew of a term to be used for what I understand it to mean".
- ³ The full transcripts of these interviews are included as appendix three. In this chapter, though I've not altered the words of those who kindly gave their time to be interviewed, it has been useful to edit and at times to invent some of my own interjections in order to emphasize a sense of conversation *between* these practitioners.
- ⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from questionnaire responses or telephone conversations, with permission given for use within this thesis.
- ⁵ Petra Kuppers herself suffers from a pain-related disability which means that she is often a wheelchair user.
- ⁶ Tour of six London parks, July – August 2001
- ⁷ Tour of children's playgrounds, Scotland 2000, England 2001
- ⁸ Hendra Pit (claypit), Nanpea, Cornwall, summer 2000
- ⁹ BMW group plant, Oxford, February – March 2001 (see Chapter Five for a discussion of this performance in terms of its deployment of 'industrial rhythms').
- ¹⁰ St Catherine's Chapel, Guildford, April 2001 (also discussed in Chapter Five).
- ¹¹ First performed at St Luke's Church, Holloway, June 2001
- ¹² Stairwells of Chisenhale Dance Space, London, April 2001
- ¹³ 291 Gallery, London, November 2000
- ¹⁴ Grounds of Chelmsford & Essex Museum, 1992
- ¹⁵ Trilogy of performances at Welsh Folk Museum, Cardiff, 1991-5
- ¹⁶ Brighton beach, May 1984
- ¹⁷ Brighton beach, 1997
- ¹⁸ One example is Sirens Crossing's *Trace and Flight 2* in the foyer spaces of the Royal Festival Hall.
- ¹⁹ I shall come to look in more detail at these ideas in Chapter Four, where I discuss the impact upon the York Millennium Mystery Plays of their location within York Minster.
- ²⁰ For the purposes of clarity and consistency I have tended throughout this chapter to go with common rather than grammatical usage by using the plural and not the singular form to refer to a group or company. This fits with the tendency of the majority of survey respondents.
- ²¹ Mick Martin, 'Romeo and Juliet: Oxford'. *The Guardian*, 30 June 2001.
- ²² The Year of the Artist scheme funded through the Regional Arts Boards (see Note 22, below).
- ²³ Many artists are wary of responding to these elements: there is, it seems, a fine line between engaging performatively with spatial aesthetics and treating a site merely as backdrop.
- ²⁴ The Arts Councils provide arts funding with monies from the government and the national lottery, though they are non-political and operate independently. There are three British councils: The Arts Council of England, The Scottish Arts Council, and The Arts Council of Wales. The Arts Council of England, at the time of the survey, worked in conjunction with ten Regional Arts Boards, through which about 30% of its funding was delivered. These Regional Arts Boards (RABs) were: Eastern Arts; East Midlands Arts; London Arts Board; Northern Arts; North West Arts Board; Southern Arts; South East Arts; South West Arts; West Midlands Arts; Yorkshire Arts. In 2002 this model changed and the Arts Council of England now operates as one funding body, and the ten separate boards have

become nine regional arts councils (Northern Arts has become the north east council, and Southern Arts has been dropped altogether).

²⁵ Nicholas Young (Theatre Officer, Southern Arts), in response to my questions.

²⁶ From the Year of the Artist website: www.yota.org.uk (no longer active).

²⁷ These are:

- Bobby Baker (live art performances at two Time Out magazine award ceremonies: Food, Drink and Performance, and *Wearing the Christmas Dinner* for the Christmas awards, June 2000 – January 2001);
- Helena Goldwater (*Gone Dark*, guided walks created with the local community at Theatre Royal Margate, March – May 2001, South East Arts)
- Grid Iron's Ben Harrison (*Into Our Dreams*, promenade performance with 40 young people, Almeida Theatre, June 2000, London Arts);
- Miriam Keye (with Andy Reeves – *Signal*, dance/drama performance with Leicester Deaf Children's Society, Richard Attenborough Centre, Leicester University, July – September 2000, East Midlands Arts);
- Kate Lawrence (with visual artist Janine Creaye – *St Catherine's Chapel Project*, dance/theatre/visual art performance along the River Wey and at St Catherine's Chapel, Guildford, January – April 2001, South East Arts);
- Sue Palmer (with Vic Llewellyn – *Hair Raising*, performance and installations at GJ's Hair Salon, Shepton Mallet, February 2001, South West Arts);
- Red Earth (two projects for South East Arts: Caitlin Easterby – *Hive* (sculpture project in conjunction with Sussex Wildlife Trust, Woodfield Nature Reserve, Henfield, West Sussex/Booth Museum, March – April 2001) and Simon Pascoe – *Aquifer* (walk, installations and events along underwater aquifer routes from North Downs to the sea at Brighton);
- Riptide (two projects for East Midlands Arts: *Who Let the Wolf In?* (exhibition and performance at Hayes & Borrajo Veterinary Surgeons, Leicester, November – December 2000) and *The HeART of Leicester* (one of four sets of artists creating work on the Leicester Mercury web site, made in conjunction Leicester City Council and Stayfree Multi-Media);
- Welfare State's John Fox (with Peter Moser – *Cheap Art*, songs, objects and stories at outdoor markets in Cumbria and Lancashire, April – May 2001, Northern Arts);
- Wrights & Sites (the core members were involved in three projects for South West Arts: Stephen Hodge – *Exeter A-Z* (scrolling LED signs on Exeter buses, Stagecoach Devon Ltd, September 2000), Simon Persighetti – *Passages* (performance events in Exeter's underground passages, January – April 2001) and Cathy Turner and Phil Smith – *Outer Space/Inner Space* (research and writing of a play about physics for secondary schools, University of Exeter School of Physics, February – March 2001). The company also created a Year of the Artist launch event for South West Arts: *The Dig* at Exeter Phoenix, June 2000.

Not all of the projects were site-specific. Further details of the projects and Year of the Artist in general can be found in Capaldi & Chadbourn 2001.

²⁸ These examples are drawn from practitioners' responses to question 3: "How would you define 'site-specific' performance in the context of your work?"

²⁹ Sophia Lycouris of Kunstwerk-Blend uses the term 'site-specific' for work within theatre spaces because "I take into account the nature of those spaces in a rather major way". She recognizes, however, that this is not the usual understanding of the term and would not use this description "without clarifying the character of my site-specificity"

³⁰ A potential third way, not explored in the survey, is to situate these debates in relation to notions of the mobility of the site. This idea is taken up in Chapter Seven.

³¹ The continuum was proposed by company member Stephen Hodge during a presentation given by Wrights & Sites at the Performance of Place conference, University of Birmingham, May 2001.

³² For example, the company's successful production of *Moby Dick*, touring to ports, quays and harbours around Britain in 2000 and 2001.

³³ While 36 of the respondents would use the term to funders and those within the performance profession without further explanation, only 23 would use it in the same way to those outside the performance profession. However, it is worth noting one response that provides an antithesis to the

other answers: for Justin Mckeown, 'site-specific' seems to be the more self-explanatory and user-friendly term, and he would therefore use it to those outside of the profession so as not to alienate them but might use "terminology more specific to art actions" when speaking to someone more familiar with performance art.

³⁴ Manchester-based puppet theatre company.

³⁵ Line used on advertising literature for *Shot Through the Heart*, summer 2000.

³⁶ Thirty-one chose this, making it the second most popular choice after reasons of aesthetics (33). Artists were invited to identify more than one reason for creating their site-specific work.

³⁷ The London Bubble artistic policy can be found on the company website at www.londonbubble.org.uk

³⁸ Cathy Turner of Wrights & Sites, document sent with the questionnaire response.

³⁹ Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*. London: Routledge, 2000.

⁴⁰ The average proportion of outdoor to indoor performance approaches 2:1 (64% of outdoor performances to 36% of indoor).

⁴¹ Walter Ong, objecting strongly to the "monstrous concept" of 'oral literature', writes: "in concert with the terms 'oral literature' and 'preliterate', we hear mention also of the 'text' of an oral utterance. 'Text', from a root meaning 'to weave', is, in absolute terms, more compatible etymologically with oral utterance than is 'literature'... But in fact, when literates today use the term 'text' to refer to oral performance, they are thinking of it by analogy with writing" (1982: 13).

⁴² My response to, and development of, such ideas of rhythm is explored in Chapter Five.

⁴³ First performed in Baker's own kitchen in London as part of LIFT '91.

⁴⁴ Each part of the project is very well documented in Wrights & Sites, eds. *Site-Specific: The Quay Thing Documented*.

Part Two: Explorations

Chapter Three: Performing (Bore) Place Rules and Spatial Behaviour

*Architecture and events constantly transgress
each other's rules.
(Mike Pearson & Michael Shanks, Theatre/Archaeology)*

An enquiry into site-specificity as *practice* as well as idea is unavoidably also an enquiry into the relationship between landscape¹, movement and control. In organizing this relationship, a number of 'rules' combine to generate a social and ethical framework for understanding our engagement with spaces and the meanings this produces.² They operate here not only as the means by which sites are controlled, but also as the structure for the narratives that we might create in those spaces. These might include narratives of identity (Hetherington 1998), of separation (Liggett 1995: 269), of forecast (Hillier 1984; Hillier & Hanson 1996)³ and of resistance (de Certeau 1984). In its focus on notions of 'rules' this chapter proposes a phenomenological approach that, at the same time, remains attentive to the precise political and historical circumstances in which particular spaces are experienced (see Bender 1998: 35-38).

The process of 'exploration' is positioned here as both mode of analysis and experience of site. As the first exploration of the thesis, this chapter is concerned with what this process might mean in practice. It asks what principles might guide an enquiry into site-specificity, and what tactics might be used in critical response to the processes of making site-specific performance. One value in framing the discussion in these terms of exploration, process, principles, tactics and rules is to signal a move away from the analysis of space in solely visual terms. While the map-maker begins by *ruling* out a grid in which spaces will be represented as visual constructs, a complementary form of orientation exists in the excursion, which proceeds instead by *rule of thumb*. I want to consider the two modes of knowledge invoked here as examples of, respectively, the strategic and tactical operations theorized by de Certeau.

I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power ... can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be delimited as its *own*...

By contrast with a strategy, ... a *tactic* is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. ... The space of a tactic is the space of the other.

(1984: 35-37; original emphasis)

De Certeau argues that a range of located “ways of operating” can be identified, and that those practiced by spatial users rather than recognized producers constitute an art of “making do” (30). The practices involved in both kinds of operation are necessarily multiple and carefully nuanced, given that “society produces more than one strategy and there are a range of tactical responses” (Hetherington 1998: 76). Furthermore, a clear divide between those whose operations are strategic and those whose are tactical is difficult, and politically problematic, to maintain (de Certeau himself, for example, points to ways in which strategies might be “transformed into tactics” (37)). Rather, as I suggested in the introduction, we might conceive of these operations as *ways of knowing* discerned “across different distributions of power” (Ahearne 1995: 163) and practiced at different times, and for various reasons, by performance-makers, spectators and scholars.⁴

As part of my aim in this thesis is to explore methods appropriate to the analysis of site-specificity, it is useful to consider my own tactics, and perhaps sometimes strategies, in this endeavour. The metaphor of ‘rules’, and my connection of this with de Certeau’s concept of ‘making do’, is presented as a means of strategically organizing some ideas about spatial movement and control. One site-specific manoeuvre within this framework is to invoke Foucault’s notion of ‘heterotopia’, where a site might be understood to juxtapose “in a single real place different spaces and locations that are incompatible with each other” (Foucault 1997: 354). Neither of these models seeks to provide a ‘toolkit’ for analysis, but rather they open up a number of questions around spatial organization, use and social meaning. That they are unstable (as Ahearne (1995: 164) has argued in the case of de Certeau) is a useful part of my exploration into the kinds of theoretical frameworks that might be brought into dialogue with site-specific performance. The further use of unstable concepts – here, the ‘repertoire’ (Schechner 1993; Hetherington 1998) and the ‘inner rule’ (Calvino 1997) – is a tactic that seems to recognize something of the amorphousness of space and the various narratives we construct in our attempts to understand it. This

allows the chapter to engage with some of the questions of methodology that site-specific practitioners face.

Another of my tactics in this chapter has been to focus on a site rather than a performance, but it is a site that might be said already to be being performed in a number of significant ways.

Bore Place

The 'case study' adopted here is a large stately home and grounds such as you might find in any part of Britain. A leaflet about Bore Place produced by the Commonwork Group informs us that it is "a 500 acre dairy farm in Kent". A statement such as this appears to form a neat summary that provides us with geographic location (we can 'place' Bore Place in Kent, and then link this with our 'knowledge base' that, perhaps, tells us that Kent is a county in south-east England), size (500 acres), and purpose (it operates within the market economy as a dairy farm). But this is just one representation.

Circling and cutting through the space that is thus categorized for us by the Commonwork leaflet is a 'field trail': a country walk described in a set of written instructions and delineated by a series of coloured marker posts. This is the legitimate, public route through Bore Place, the site itself acting only as start and end point for a walk that literally revolves around it. Within the circle of the field trail, Bore Place is more than one place at once: it is working farm, ex family home, performance site, education centre, focus of ghost stories, set of ecologically-motivated businesses, and creative laboratory. It is made up of a number of spaces (the walled garden; the manor house; the dairy shed; the green man glade), each designed with a different purpose and invoking a different set of cultural and historical connotations. Any attempt to document and analyse the site must, it seems, negotiate a path through the set of dichotomies operating at Bore Place: public/private; agriculture/culture; past/present; work/play; nature/art(ifice).

Following de Certeau's theory of 'making do', then, I want to concentrate on users: how they might negotiate such a path and what tactics they might bring to this

enterprise. So what I'm asking in this chapter is 'how is (Bore) Place performed for and by us?'. While my analysis intersects with a number of similar place studies in other disciplines,⁵ the lens of performance studies is invaluable here for focusing on this and other questions that I want to ask of the site. Performance itself moves under the lens of enquiry when I ask how the approaches developed through the study of rules at Bore Place might be employed in the analysis of site-specific performance. Reading Bore Place as a heterotopia, I am interested in the relationships of its spatial arrangements and the ways in which these reference and complicate our understanding of other spaces (Foucault 1997: 352). My discussion analyses the types of movement and activity that the site invites and the ways in which it might be said to limit and channel these. I ask how the rules are created, and what options are available to different sets of users when interacting with these rules. The concept of 'rules' proposed here is, in part, understood in terms of expectations and conventions of behaviour, of what can be done and seen in a space and how one might move about it. By exploring and expanding this notion of spatial rules and, crucially, negotiation between sets of rules, I begin to explore some possibilities for approaching site-specific performance.

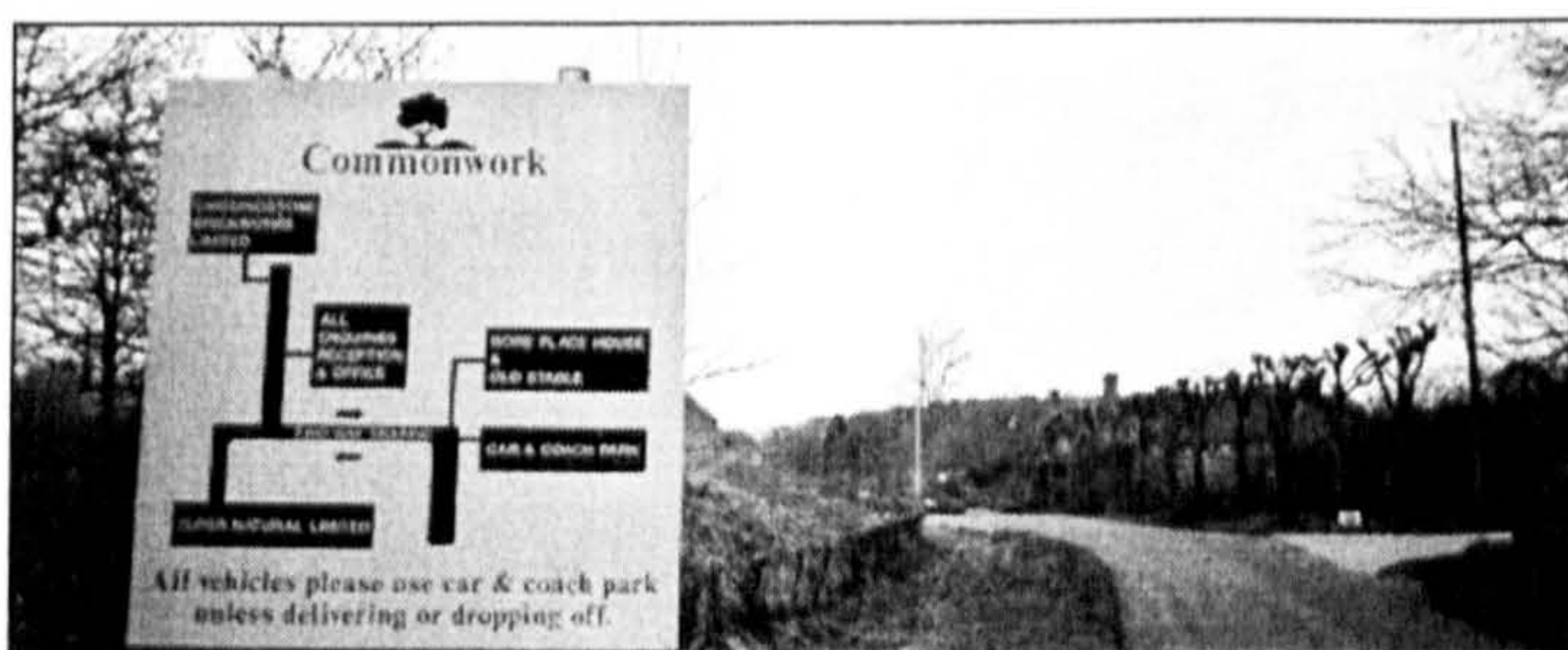
Constructing meaning: six experiences of Bore Place

Experience One: Field Trail

Commonwork is a group of rural enterprises and charitable trusts, set up in 1977 by Neil and Jenifer Wates at Bore Place, a 500 acre dairy farm in Kent. Its long-term aim is to change hearts and minds towards the recognition that we and all life are inter-related

(Bore Place Field Trail leaflet, Commonwork)

Experience Two: Signs

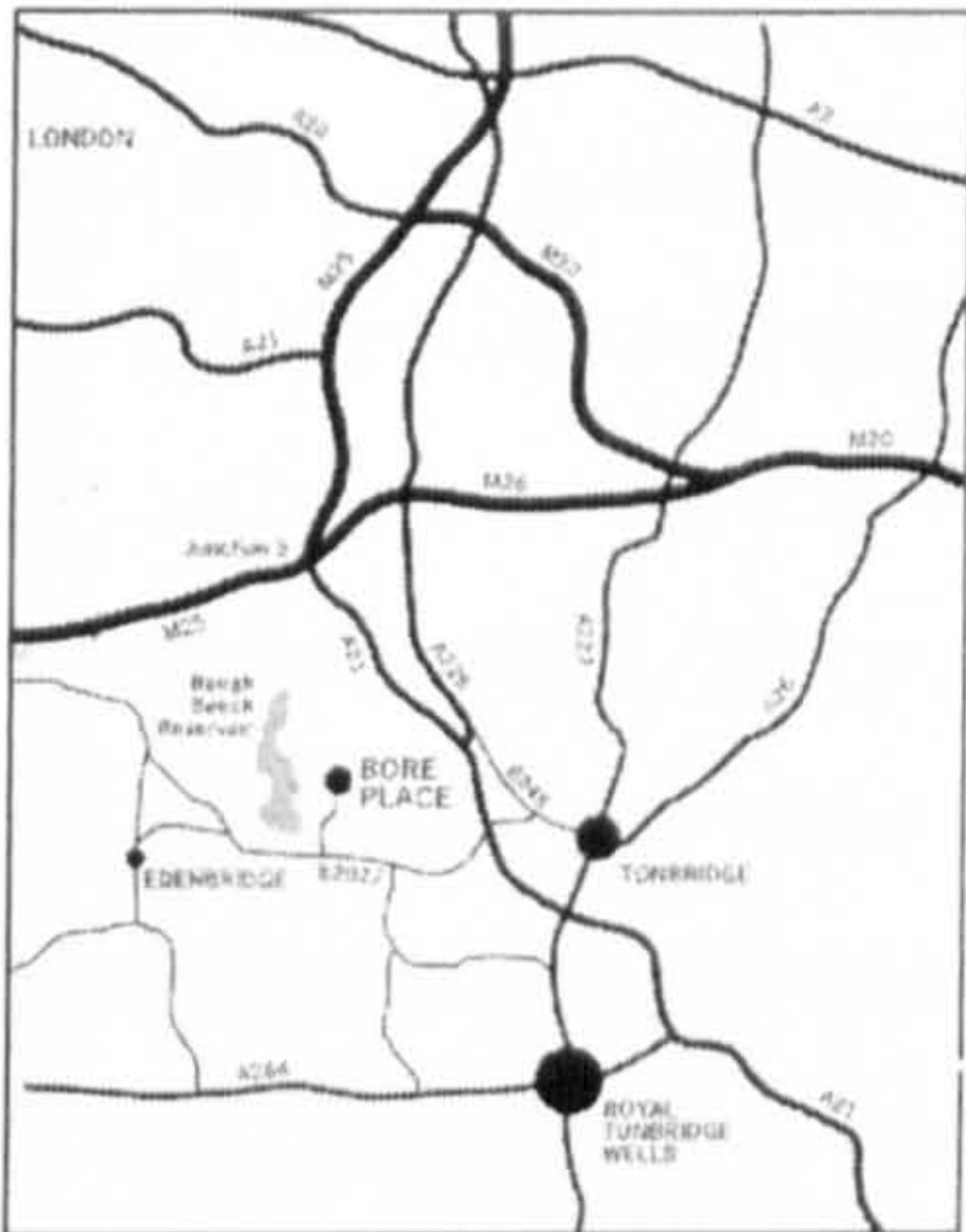


Experience Three: Susan Benn

It's a 500 acre farm in the wild of Kent. Miraculously, 35 minutes from London, which you don't feel at all. You're in the middle of nowhere. It's a house which has Jacobean origins and it's been evolving over centuries because we've discovered that actually before the Jacobean came there were people over there on the ridge since the Bronze Age. So it's kind of evolving architecturally: bits missing, bits added from Queen Anne and '30s extensions to a kind of wonderful hybrid mixture of friendly spaces.

(Susan Benn⁶)

Experience Four: Mappings



Experience Five: Story-telling

There was a long history to the "Place" as an old script and map showed, where it hung in one of the large rooms. There was also the legend of a "Headless Horseman" who rode through the farm on a certain night of the year. A supposed tunnel ran from the "Place" to Sharp Farm, but it was never uncovered. Also a treasure lay buried inside the ancient garden walls, and another story that a monastery existed; to pique my curiosity and a probing interest.

(J. Brown, article in Kent Life, November 1973)

Experience Six: Green Man



* * * * *

Just as contemporary performance critics acknowledge that the position of the spectator (both literally within the performance space and metaphorically in terms of the historical and cultural ‘baggage’ that each carries) must be taken into account when offering an analysis of a theatrical work (Melrose 1994;⁷ Bennett 1997), so the experience of a particular space will depend to a certain extent on the role and position of the individual within that space. At any given moment, then, Bore Place is ‘performing’ parallel, overlapping or contradictory functions for different people. But this does not mean that an analysis of the ways in which it performs is not possible. In his work on architecture, Stewart Brand argues that buildings adjust and ‘learn’ through time, adapting in relation to the human activities for which they’re used.⁸ Following Brand, let us work with the notion that Bore Place has collected (and had imposed upon it) meanings and associations across history(ies), and suggest that, though these will resonate differently for each new inhabitant (however temporary) of the space depending on his/her position, the sets of rules operating within the site guide users toward particular modes of experience.

Each of the types of space that we might identify ‘within’ Bore Place’ has its own rules and its own ways of performing the site. The signposts displayed throughout the site (see Experience Two, above) are not only a format for presenting information, but also a means of guiding movement and initiating the visitor into the rules of Bore Place. Similarly, the map (Experience Four), often a user’s first experience of a site, invites us to view Bore Place from the strategic perspective of the map-maker and to locate the site within a particular wider context. Taking as further examples three of the six ‘experiences’ introduced above, I want to indicate some of the ways in which these invoke rules and perform a version of Bore Place.

Field Trail

Users of the Bore Place Field Trail are guided by a map, set of directions and coloured marker posts en route that dictate which paths will be

Susan Benn

Bore Place was formerly Susan Benn’s family home and her position is therefore unusual in relation to other users of the site. As Bachelard has shown,

Green Man

The figure of the Green Man (a face surrounded by or growing into branches and foliage) is predominantly, although

followed and which disregarded, which fields will be traversed and which avoided, and generally which aspects of the site are worthy of inclusion in a field trail. Significantly, the field trail route also dictates the physical positions from which Bore Place itself will be viewed. Like de Certeau's walker, who actualizes part of the "ensemble of possibilities" (de Certeau 1984: 98) made available by the spatial order, the walker on the field trail is invited to exercise choice within the constructed order: the eastern section of the trail can be covered on its own or in combination with the western section. "Cross the lane, up some steps and enter Kilnhouse Wood – or you can take the lane back to the Car Park".

There are other, 'borrowed' codes at work here. The Commonwork field trail leaflet asks visitors to "keep the Country Code", and in doing so draws on a set of one's memories are 'housed' in a building one has inhabited, and it is "physically inscribed in us" (1994: 14), affecting the rules of movement around it. Susan Benn's position also means that her narrative is framed through the terms of authority, ownership and familiarity. This narrative invites particular 'ways of seeing' Bore Place. Firstly, it employs a 'best of both worlds' version of the city/country dichotomy by emphasizing the proximity of Bore Place to London while at the same time (through the use of the word "miraculously") positioning the site firmly in the country. Secondly, Susan Benn's narrative asks us to view the manor house as a patchwork, a monument to a number of different histories. As an example of Stewart Brand's architectural model cited above, it is significant that not only has Bore Place house been added to over the centuries but that parts of it have also been taken away.¹⁰ This image of the not exclusively, a European phenomenon found mostly in churches and cathedrals. Despite its religious context, the Green Man mythology has been traced to a number of pagan origins, including English May Day celebrations, the Jack-in-the Green,¹² and early incarnations of Robin Hood. Although its presence necessarily invokes such traditions, the decision to create a Green Man Glade (featuring a Green Man sculpture fixed to a tree) as part of the Bore Place gardens speaks particularly to the ecological aims of Commonwork and its associated set of businesses. While "the search for a meaning behind the symbol"¹³ has yielded no definitive answer (images of fertility, masculinity, the death/re-birth cycle, and misrule have all been

rules external to Bore Place itself but that are made to apply to the site only in its manifestation as field trail. The County Code is not brought into play in other usages of the site and therefore is not a rule of Bore Place *per se*.

Rules that might fit into the latter category are those that de Certeau refers to as a site's "interdictions", exemplified in the "wall that prevents one from going further" (1984: 98). Physical barriers such as buildings (the cow shed, oast house, brickworks, etc.), the pond and the walled garden⁹ are man-made features of the site that govern movement around them and control the available points of entry and exit.

manor house brings two conflicting 'rules' into dialogue. On the one hand, the notion that the house is fluid and open to change takes its place as part of an ethos of recycling that can be attributed to Bore Place: the Commonwork rule of 'waste as a misplaced resource'. A cycle of processes acts across the farm, giving a curious sense of the site feeding into itself (for example, the dairy is built from Bore Place elms which were blighted with Dutch Elm Disease¹¹). On the other hand, the manor house (together with the walled garden) is now Grade II listed, and thereby subject to a system of authority conferring historical and cultural status but also bringing with it a set of strict rules about what can and cannot be done to it in future.

suggested), Commonwork emphasizes the image of the Green Man as "archetype of our oneness with the earth".¹⁴ The Commonwork website tells us that "the Green Man symbolizes our connection with nature". The use of the Green Man as ecological symbol at Bore Place therefore reinforces one underlying rule of the site, but its presence – as a sculpture placed within a natural environment – also hints at the nature/art dichotomy operating at Bore Place. It is in one sense 'out of place', unexpected, a surprise to the user who happens upon it while walking in the gardens.

Public *versus* private;
 agriculture *versus* culture;
 past *versus* present;
 work *versus* play;
 nature *versus* art(ifice).

Figure 4: Bore Place



By drawing links (both supportive and antagonistic) between different sets of rules we begin to explore how the various parts of Bore Place speak to one another and what effect their juxtaposition has. It becomes clear that, although I speak of different sets of rules, the spatial rules *as experienced* by a user of the site are created out of the dialogue *between* rules. Certainly some ‘rules’ gain in prominence depending on what function Bore Place is performing for you at any given moment, while others remain constant – ‘built in’ to the space itself, no matter what it is used for. But these types do not operate in isolation; they are always interwoven,

coming together and pulling apart to guide and invite behaviour and to present the user with choices to be made. A recent development in architectural design, the space syntax method (introduced in endnote 3) is useful here because it enable us to think in terms of patterns created by users in response to the built environment; it also introduces the possibility that the way in which people move in spaces will affect how future environments are built. One of the questions asked by the space syntax method is “how does the pattern of streets in a city influence patterns of movement and social interaction?”.¹⁵ The method might be developed as a means of approaching the concept of theatre and, particularly, site-specific performance, enabling us to explore and analyse the movements of audience and performers within the performance space.

It might be useful here to summarize some of the categories of rules affecting movement in and around sites, in descending order of rigidity. For each I have given examples both from Bore Place and from the traditional theatre building (the rules of the latter are, of course, inscribed through particular historical and cultural moments).

	<i>Bore Place</i>	<i>Traditional Theatre Building</i>
1. physical barriers/ constraints	the walled garden; the	the ‘fourth wall’

(both man-made and natural) that restrict and channel movement;	pond; field trail paths	containing the proscenium arch; rows of seats; doors (main entrance; auditorium doors; stage door)
2. explicit rules stated by controllers of the site;	'do not drive on verges'	'no drinks to be taken into the auditorium'
3. borrowed codes that are brought to bear on particular types of space;	the country code; the historic buildings grading system	fire safety regulations ¹⁶
4. implicit conventions that work to affect and organize behaviour through communal agreement.	keeping to the paths	applauding at the end of a performance; not talking during the performance

I have begun to hint at what might be the rules of the traditional theatre as a precursor to my discussion of the rules at work in site-specific performance. It is significant that there is a tendency among practitioners to treat site-specific work as a means of moving away from the strict codes of the traditional theatre and encouraging creative freedom. In my discussion of negotiation processes later in this chapter I will return to this notion, enquiring into the extent to which these codes can be escaped.

Each of these four types I have listed could be understood in the more usual sense of rules, lists of dos and don'ts, an understanding that takes me only part way to articulating those notions of rules suggested through the three experiences discussed above. If I can read Bore Place as an example of Foucault's heterotopia, a juxtaposition of incompatible spaces in dialogue with one another, I must recognize that the factors at work in influencing my movement and behaviour in, and experience of, this site are multiple and intricately related. In order to begin to make sense of this, and to suggest ways forward for performance analysis, I shall expand the notion of spatial rules in two important directions.

The first of these I want to call 'the repertoire'.

The repertoire

I walk into the bookshop at the bottom of the High Street; I prefer this to the one on the next street – the sections I like to pause in are inviting, tucked away in corners, there are more curves and right-angles than straight lines. I feel at home here. Reaching to the top of the Es in the fiction section, I take down The Name of the Rose. My movement to the carpeted floor occurs in stages as first, finding it easier to browse without holding on to my bag, I place the rucksack on the floor in front of me and then, getting engrossed in a passage, I crouch down before finally, moving my legs under me, I am sitting cross-legged on the floor. On page twenty-six I read that "architecture, among all the arts, is the one that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe". I like this idea – that the built environment responds to the natural environment – it reminds me of Italo Calvino. I am now at eye-level with a woman in the Fs. She's crouching by Forster (E.M., that is, not Margaret, although she may move on to her). I smile; she smiles back. It is a smile of complicity, of recognition.

Why do I feel that I can sit on the floor next to a display in a bookshop but not in, say, a supermarket? Neither place operates a 'no sitting' rule, nor do I feel that I am participating in an implicit agreement with my fellow customers not to sit in these places (though such an agreement is probably what causes me to wait in a queue to be served). Spatial layout, of course, influences my behaviour, but there is something more than this at work. It has to do, I think, not only with the presence of books and the fact that they require or invite a different kind of perusal to food, but also with the fact that I have seen others sit on the floor in bookshops. This type of behaviour has become, for me at least, something that 'can be done' in a bookshop; while not strictly 'against the rules', I would feel awkward sitting on a supermarket floor.

We need, then, to extend the notion of rules of spatial behaviour beyond the categories identified above to encompass this sense of appropriateness. To facilitate such a move I want to refer to the work of Joseph Esherick and Jeffrey Wasserstrom in theorizing the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations, taken up by Schechner in a more explicitly performative context:

First of all it was street theater: untitled, improvisational, with constantly changing casts. Though fluid in form, it nevertheless followed what Charles Tily (1978) calls a historically established “repertoire” of collective action. This means that, even when improvising, protesters worked from familiar “scripts” which gave a common sense of how to behave during a given action, where and when to march, how to express their demands, and so forth. Some of these scripts originated in the distant past, emerging out of traditions of remonstrance and petition stretching back for millennia. More were derived (consciously or unconsciously) from the steady stream of student-led mass movements that have taken place [in China] since 1919.

(cited in Schechner 1993: 54)

A similar use of ‘repertoire’ is developed by Kevin Hetherington, who analyses “the spatiality of identity in terms of performance and the ways in which identity is expressed through ongoing performative repertoires” (1998: 141). For Hetherington, the idea of a repertoire as a sociological phenomenon is closely connected with Schechner’s theory of ‘restored behaviour’. One important consequence of this is that the repertoire, understood in terms of ‘strips of restored behaviour’, can be seen to operate independently of the ‘actors’ who perform it (153) and might therefore be attached instead to those spaces in which identity is contested, performed and revised. This notion of a ‘repertoire’ of actions or behaviour is rich with possibilities for documenting space and analysing movement within particular sites. The repertoire – a set of choices (culturally, traditionally, personally or physically defined) available to people in a particular space – is created, in part, by what has gone before in that space. When an event or series of events has famously occurred in a particular site it forms part of the repertoire of behaviour available there. In addition to the political demonstrations in Tiananmen Square we might point to a host of other examples, including New Year celebrations in London’s Trafalgar Square and, on a more sombre note, jumping from Beachy Head. In each case a particular mode of behaviour is associated with a place and becomes part of ‘what can be done’ in that site.

By extension, if we can talk of a repertoire or ‘script’ in this way then we are led to the linked notions of re-writing or amending the script or adding to the repertoire. Richard Schechner (1988: 156) suggests that

the first theaters were not merely “natural spaces” ... but were also, and fundamentally, “cultural places.” The transformation of space into place means to construct a theater; this transformation is accomplished by “writing on the space,” as the cave art of the Paleolithic period demonstrates so well. This writing need not be visual, it can be oral as with the Aborigines.¹⁷

For us, Schechner’s concept of ‘writing’ on a space (imagined, as he points out, not purely in the literal sense) can be aligned with the creation of a repertoire/script of that space. Part of the documentation and analysis process, therefore, involves an investigation into the various people and influences that have written/inscribed themselves on Bore Place; similarly, this process examines the ways in which Bore Place might be said to have been written and explores the possibilities for it to be re-written in the future. What Schechner does not engage with, however, is the possibility that sites (through their users, controllers or physical layout) may *resist* being written on. The repertoire, therefore, involves an awareness not only of those types of writing that are permitted in a space but also of those that are discouraged, forbidden or unrealizable.

Whilst writing this section I cannot avoid the news, and every paper or TV bulletin has something to say about the controversy surrounding the Cuban boy Elian Gonzalez and whether or not he should be returned by the US to Cuba. A friend tells me (but can’t remember where he heard it) that Fidel Castro is planning to set up a public square in Havana as a place for the people’s protests against the US. I think again about Tiananmen Square and the way in which it has been adopted over time as a site of public protest and political demonstration, and wonder: what happens to the repertoire of such sites when they are officially sanctioned? will demonstrative action respond to an invitation in this way? can another site suddenly be given the associations that would usually accrue through time?

Returning to the six experiences introduced toward the beginning of this chapter, I want to draw on Experience Five, J. Brown’s 1973 article in *Kent Life*, in order to tease out the implications of one evocative way in which Bore Place has been written on and, in the process, performed. Brown’s own journalistic performance of the site slips without pause between the labels ‘history’, ‘legend’ and ‘story’. The ease of this slippage appears to align the terms as means of writing on, or telling of, a “place” (it is notable that he abbreviates Bore Place in this way). But it is worth reminding ourselves that each term, by implication, attaches a different level of authority and reality to the material it precedes. History, legend and story emerge from this account

as layers of meaning that have become attached to Bore Place over time through local oral tradition and preserved manuscripts and maps. The enticing tales of ghosts, underground worlds, and buried treasure create a performative site repertoire constituting what has (been imagined to have) occurred there in the past. Here the performative shifts between geographical and metaphorical spaces that I discussed in Chapter One become useful. In the same way that, for de Certeau, stories “traverse and organize places; ... select and link them together; ... make sentences and itineraries out of them” (1984: 115), this imaginative repertoire of myth and memory marks playful Xs on the map of Bore Place and forges links: between parts of Bore Place, between Bore Place and its immediate environs, and between Bore Place and the spaces of fantasy and legend. By this latter type of link I mean to indicate that Bore Place is drawn into a matrix of spaces that ‘contain’ similar traces of ghosts and legend; an example of such a space might be that created through Tim Burton’s 1999 film *Sleepy Hollow*, which tells of another headless horseman. But what is especially compelling for me about this particular experience of Bore Place is the divide that it seems to create between different sets of users of the site, a divide separating those who are ‘in the know’ from those who are not. Can Bore Place itself be said to speak of its history, displaying hints of its past like clues in a detective story? Or do these stories and legends lie hidden beneath the surface, only to be revealed through the exploratory processes of certain users of the site?

These stories and legends perform a set of seductive readings of the site, paving the way for a consideration of the role of *theatrical* performance here. Drawing on Schechner’s work, we might figure performance as one means of ‘writing’ on a space. Site-specific performance’s act of writing on a space might simultaneously be an act of erasing what has previously been written, as in the palimpsestic image employed by Nick Kaye:

the palimpsest, a paper ‘which has been written upon twice, the original having been rubbed out’ (Onions 1973) or ‘prepared for writing on and wiping out again’ (Onions 1973), not only provides a model for the relationship of non-place to place, but, in the context of a transitive definition of site, of site-specificity itself. Thus, *Nights In This City* approaches the real city as palimpsest, by acting out a writing over of sites already written upon. Furthermore, in this *moving on* from site, this site-

specific performance attempts to define itself *in* the very sites it is caught in the process of erasing.

(Kaye 2000: 11, original emphasis)

But this is just one approach to working site-specifically, an approach that, as Kaye points out, seeks to “trouble the oppositions between the site and the work” (11). In the potential incompleteness of the erasure, performance might be more interested in revealing the layers of ‘writing’ beneath.

Discussing site-specificity in terms of layers leads to an archaeological image of the kind explored by Mike Pearson, who suggests that sites are “aggregations of narratives” with the archaeological excavation or the site-specific performance as “simply the most recent occupation, usage, of a site” and “performers as a band, occupying a site for a short period” (1994: 135-6). Here the narratives created by past events, stories and accretions (which I have referred to as a site’s repertoire) are apparent in the performance as “source, framing, subtext” (135) in a reciprocal relationship between performance and site. Referring back to the story-telling experience discussed above, I would argue that Bore Place has accrued a repertoire that offers a rich source of inspiration for future performance ‘writing’ on the site.¹⁸

This expansion of spatial rules to include the concept of the repertoire thus makes it clear that, within an environment of rules, the range of choices available to users is wider than simply keeping or breaking these rules. Between these two poles can be found a number of strategic or tactical operations that might be better characterized in terms of elasticity, of bending, testing, amending or re-writing the rules. Within the matrix of rules operating within the performance site, performance makers (as site users) have the potential to bring their own set of rules to bear upon a space, to subvert or even flout the rules that they find in that space, to explore and test those rules, to reinforce them or, perhaps, to work by ‘rule of thumb’. Each of these possibilities represents a different position to be taken with regard to the performance site and a different choice to be made as to the nature of the performance/site relationship. In site-specific performance, however, it is not only the performers who might be characterized as site users. Within the matrix of rules operating between the site and the performance, spectators (as site users) also face a series of choices as they develop a trajectory through the site and negotiate their own position and response.

Testing the Rules 1: The Praxis Group

The work of The Praxis Group in the United States is a prime example of creative practice that actively seeks to undermine spatial rules. This company uses performance to assert a particular political stance and works in opposition to 'the rules' of a site in order to mount a direct social challenge to the authorities in that place (sites encountered in this way have included an art gallery and a shopping mall). John Troyer, director of The Praxis Group, argues that "by entering into these locations for unsanctioned performances, the Praxis Group rearranges the topography of the space by creating previously unknown landmarks, images, and arguments" (1998). In this way he figures the focus of contention as the site itself, and the ways in which it is used and presented, together with the associations it gathers and the meanings it suggests. Performance in this instance becomes a weapon that carries out "the role of discursive critique and the potential destabilization of rigidified rules".

The inner rule

The second direction in which I want to expand the notion of spatial rules is toward the 'inner rule' evoked by Italo Calvino.

From the number of imaginable cities we must exclude those whose elements are assembled without a connecting thread, an inner rule, a perspective, a discourse. ... Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.

(Calvino 1997: 43-4)

In addition to the various stances outlined above, I want to suggest that the identification of an inner rule is an important means by which users can negotiate their own position with regard to a space and create meanings through the process of this negotiation. Though Calvino is concerned with the interconnectedness of elements within specifically urban environments, his terms of reference might usefully be applied to any "assembled" space. Taking the notion of the 'inner rule' as a site-specific tactic, I want to consider how its rhetoric operates in relation to connected ideas articulated by Edward Casey and Roland Barthes.

The type of work developed by The Praxis Group can only function in a very particular context: that of the rigidly controlled public institution. A different, less antagonistic approach to working creatively and site-specifically involves working *with* the rules of the space, with 'what is already there', and enhancing this aspect of

the site through the work. Giving an interview to *Art Crash Journal*, the Danish visual artist Bjørn Nørgaard expresses this concept of working with a site:

Take Hein Heinsen's suggestion for making this sculpture in Aarhus: he tackles some clear demarcations of the much discussed square in Aarhus (in front of the cathedral), which all of a sudden force you to see the square in a different way and think of it differently when you walk across it.

And initially, that may seem quite disturbing when you are used to walking there and live there. You get a bit worried that it will ruin the square. But what it really does is to strengthen the spatial function that is already there in the square. It adjoins the church, the equestrian statue and the theatre and it spans the space in a whole new way. ... No matter what you do to a certain space, the work of art has to relate to the monumental, decorative and ornamental basic principle of the space.

(Nygaard 1998: 4)

This notion of the "basic principle of the space" seems to be articulating a view akin to that expressed in Calvino's image of the "connecting thread" or "inner rule". Similarly, a further corresponding idea can be located in the poetic 'spirit of place':

To get into the spirit of a place is to enter into what makes that place such a special spot, into what is concentrated there like a fully saturated color. But the spirit of a place is also expansive.

(Casey 1993: 314)

Each of these connected terms adds its own dimension to our understanding of the inner rule. Working through the "basic principle of the space" takes us into geometrical and architectural realms, enabling us to consider elements such as spatial layout, patterns, physical connections, and the performative strategies of these. To these elements the notion of the 'spirit of place' adds a dimension of feeling, legitimating the intangible, the irrational, the intuitive response. Both, however, might seem to imply that one truth exists: *the* basic principle, *the* spirit. It will be useful, therefore, to mesh these ideas with the concept of 'punctum' that Roland Barthes elucidates in his *Camera Lucida*.

In analysing photographs Barthes engages with what he names the 'studium' of the photograph, understood in terms of an extent, the rhetoric of the photographer, the body of cultural and social knowledge that the analysis draws on. But within the photographic space Barthes notes that "occasionally ... a "detail" attracts me. I feel

that its presence changes my reading, that I am looking at a new photograph, marked in my eyes with a higher value. This “detail” is the *punctum*” (1993: 42). Taken from the Latin for a prick, a “mark made by a pointed instrument” (26), the punctum is that which ‘pricks’ the beholder of a photograph, that which catches his or her imagination, and is usually unintentional on the part of the photographer. The dimension that Barthes’s punctum adds to our notion of the inner rule is that of individual response: the punctum will be identified differently for each user of the (photographic) space. This response is removed from the intellectual level and is invested with personal resonance (for Barthes, “to give examples of *punctum* is, in a certain fashion, to *give myself up*” (43, original emphasis)).

Applying Barthes’s theory to the experience of spaces rather than photographs, the punctum is that element that attracts me to a space and that returns to me after I have physically left the site. Because of its origins in photography, it adds a visual dimension to the physical and meta-physical dimensions offered by, respectively, the ‘basic principle’ and the ‘spirit of place’. Together these form the starting point of mapping (and perhaps performatively marking) a route through a space. This route articulates the inner rule.

Figure 5: backstage and frontstage spaces at Bore Place



For me, the inner rule of Bore Place emerges through its juxtaposition of backstage and frontstage spaces (Figure 5) – legitimate public routes versus the ‘do not enter’ signs on doors; the hidden working spaces versus the display of product. This backstage/frontstage image has to do with modes of seeing, with what is on show versus what is hidden, and might be creatively articulated through theatrical exploration.

To work creatively with an inner rule is one of a number of tactics available to performance makers. For the performance analyst, also, the concept of the inner rule can be used as a way in to discussing the work in terms of its relationship to space. Performance itself becomes a method of exploring the thread or discourse found in a space, though a range of interpretations of what a site’s inner rule actually *is* might exist simultaneously. We might suggest that the creation of a site-specific performance involves identifying an inner rule that works *for you* (and thereby offering it to your spectators to propose that it might work *for them*).

Testing the Rules 2: Forced Entertainment

The devising processes for Dreams’ Winter and Nights in This City, two site-specific performances, involved Forced Entertainment in different ways of ‘testing the rules’ of their chosen spaces.

The library is a place of explicit rules, of precise order, and yet (as with the bookshop) a place that invites different types of movement, different modes of viewing, than other apparently similar public institutions. As described by Tim Etchells (1999: 217-8), Manchester Central Library (for which Dreams’ Winter (1994) was commissioned) is also a place for circular movement and reverberating, travelling sound by virtue of its physical characteristics, its “dome-ceilinged space” giving “extraordinary acoustics”. Exploratory rehearsals in this site tested the explicit rules (“Our first on-site research visit there saw us running ... shouting ... dropping books ...”) and the physical rules (edges, circles, height, stillness: “What kinds of actions does the space engender?”) to arrive at a performative mix of elements that “belong in the library and others which (perhaps) do not”.

In approaching the space of a city (Rotterdam) for the 1997 reworking of Nights in This City (originally performed in Sheffield in 1995), a different tactic was used. The move from home-town to unfamiliar city was marked by a series of questions, as company members prepared for their “mischievous guided coach tour” of Rotterdam by interviewing “people who live and work there”.

"We start by asking them questions like: 'Where is the tourist centre of the city?' 'Where is a rich neighbourhood?' 'Where is a poor neighbourhood?' 'Where is an industrial area?'"

But these boring questions get the boring answers they probably deserve. We do not find what we are looking for. We switch to another tactic. Richard and Claire are talking to one of our helpers. They ask her:

If you had killed someone and had to dump the body where would you take it?

If you had to say goodbye to a lover where in this city would you most like to do it?

Where in this city might be the best place for a spaceship of aliens to land?"

(Etchells 1999: 61)

The route created out of responses to these questions becomes an alternative mapping of Rotterdam, or what Etchells refers to as "our geography"; it suggests another way of moving through the city's space as well as, framed literally through the coach window and metaphorically through the performance text/s, another way of viewing it. More than discovering and testing Rotterdam's 'rules', Forced Entertainment questions become a means of determining how users have variously negotiated and interacted with these rules.

Negotiation

So the inner rule and the repertoire enable us to consider the complexities of spatial operations and, especially, the ways in which users might engage with a site's rules. They exist at different stages of the meeting between performance and site: the repertoire belongs to the site and hints at performative 'ways in' to that site, while the inner rule emerges only as the result of a complex meshing of site and performance. The inner rule is a useful part of the phenomenological approach to site proposed in this chapter, but it does not attend to relations of power and control, displacement and appropriation. The repertoire, on the other hand, is always embedded in specific sets of political, social and historical circumstances and is only meaningful in those contexts. Together these concepts allow us to develop a deeper understanding of how spaces 'work' and how we might work with them. By discussing Bore Place through an expanded sense of rules I have sought to suggest that these rules are multi-layered and in dialogue, that its spaces contradict and reinforce one another, and that it guides the user not only through maps and signposts, paths and walls, but also through narratives: rhetoric, stories, legends, memories. At points within this discussion I have begun to point to the paths leading off from the spatial analysis into the field of performance. I want to take this further, by outlining a model that offers possibilities for the analysis of site-specific performance. This will be a model of negotiation.

One performance dynamic that can make site-specific work fascinating from an analysis point of view is precisely that the codes of the space seem not to ‘allow for’ its use as performance site. So in one sense what is interesting about site-specific performance, and what it is that forces us to develop new models with which to deal with it, is precisely that it breaks the rules. It is ‘out of place’ – that place being the traditional theatre building. But this image of breaking the rules prompts me to ask two questions.

Firstly, how far can site-specific performance really remove itself from theatrical codes and conventions? The performance event itself carries codes that will operate for a spectator (and, indeed, for a performer) whether at Bore Place or the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Applauding at the end of a performance is often one such code. The very fact that a performance is ‘taking place’ recalls the rules that have been taught through past experiences of the theatre. The rules of each particular performance are always to a greater or lesser extent also the rules of a general notion of what ‘performance’ is.

Special rules exist, are formulated, and persist because these activities [games, sports, theatre and ritual] are something *apart from everyday life*. A special world is created where people can make the rules, rearrange time, assign value to things, and work for pleasure.

(Schechner 1988: 11)

Perhaps because of this feeling that theatre is somehow set apart from everyday life, performance events both within and outside of the traditional theatre often attempt to delineate themselves, sometimes literally, from their surroundings in order to establish their own rules and to be able to adopt and explore a particular stance with regard to the ‘rules’ of the performance site. While Sue Fox of Welfare State International asserts that “street theatre is NOT taking the walls and roof off your regular theatre show”, referring to it as “a different beast altogether, with its own terms and conditions” (Coult & Kershaw 1983: 31), she also advocates marking out the performance area – for example with painted traffic cones – and having some space at the back for costume changes hidden by a van or a line of banners. What is suggested is an area whose shape is inherited from the traditional theatre.

Secondly, acknowledging that some codes of the theatre building no longer apply when performance moves out of that building, I would want to ask what replaces them. How are the 'new' rules of site-specific performance created and, significantly, how these are taught to the spectators? In terms of rules of space it is important to note the difference between explicitly marking out your performance area and deliberately not doing so. The act of marking out a performance area is simultaneously the act of declaring that area subject to a different set of rules, even though these rules will not be entirely those of the conventional theatre. If the performance area is not delineated, what other factors combine to inform spectators where and how they are expected to move? Does the spatial layout of the site guide the spectators to a particular viewing position or route through the performance? Is the performance creating some of its effects through the ambiguity of deciding what is part of the performance and what is part of the site?

It seems that the rules at play in site-specific theatre might best be represented as part of a matrix, which links with both the rules of conventional theatre and those (many layered) of the site itself. The meeting of performance with space, and the meeting of the spectator with both performance and space, involves a process of negotiation between the complexities of overlapping sets of rules.

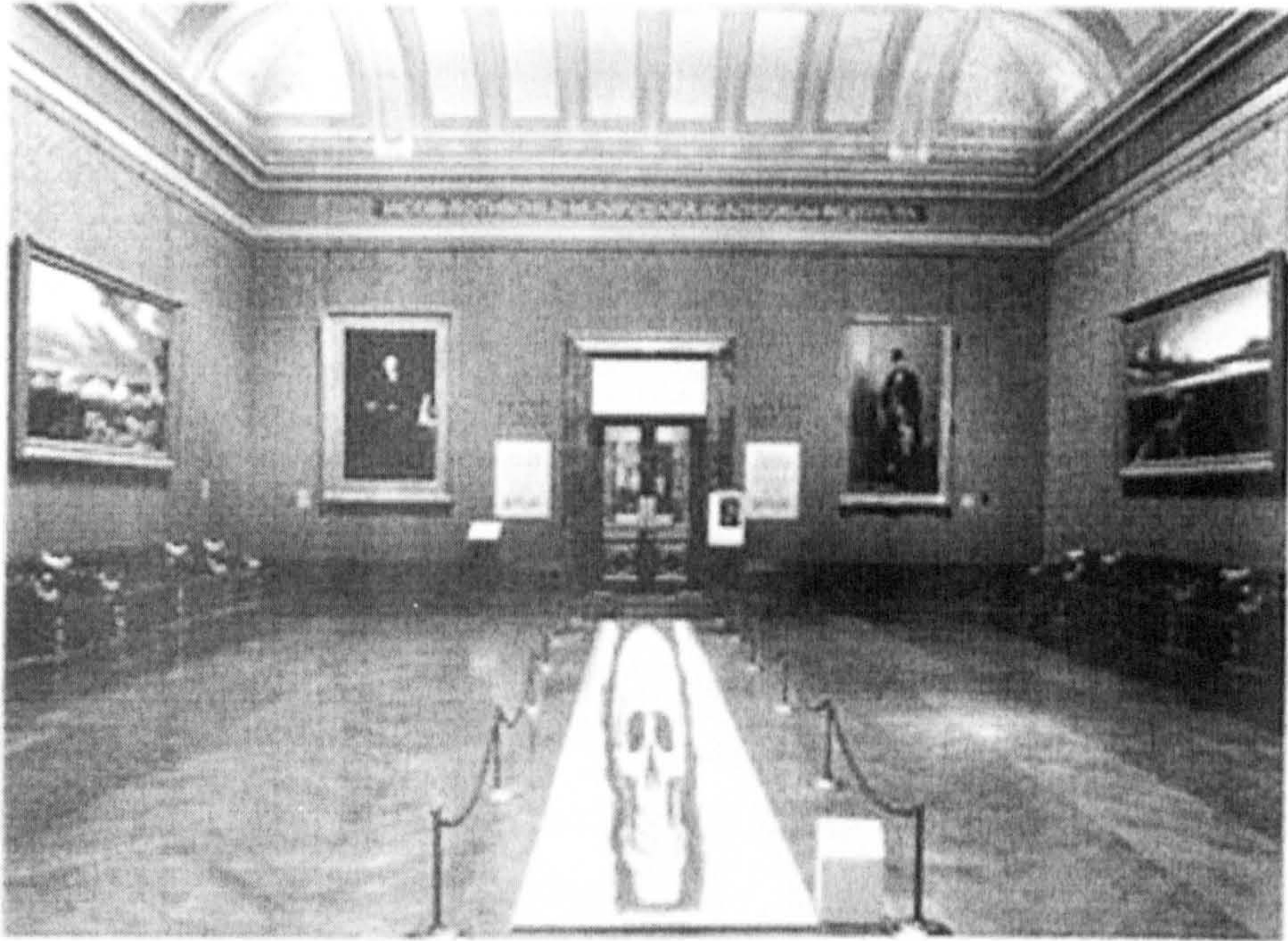
In interview with Baz Kershaw and Tony Coult, John Fox, the artistic director of Welfare State International, describes the factors that feed into his site-specific work:

So you've got your own traditions, you've got the country's traditions, you've got the specific preoccupations of the place ...; you've also got the pattern of the season and the specific geography of the place you're in. They all start to go together in a sort of cauldron – a cauldron in my head, and hopefully in company members' heads, and then it starts to simmer and distil, and you start to conjure a few key images in the stream.

(1983: 22)

This serves to remind us that performance itself is already a negotiation, in this instance between factors such as the 'inner rule' of a site and the 'rules' of the wider geographical setting, a particular company and the political and economic context in which the work is being made. Similarly we have seen that the rules of a space are

Figure 6: Adam Dawe, response to Holbein's 'The Ambassadors' (1997)



created through the tension between a number of different elements and that spectators, as users of the site, bring their own rules as they negotiate a position in relation to the site and to the performance. It is always a matter of negotiation: the performance itself brings conventions that add to, reinforce or alter those of the space, but some spatial rules abide despite the performative conditions. Such a negotiation between sets of rules was staged in a 1997 exhibition at the National Gallery, London, which included a work influenced by Holbein's painting 'The Ambassadors'. This piece¹⁹ involved a large distorted picture of a skull painted along the floor of the entrance to the exhibition (Figure 6), together with a display card giving details about the artist along with instructions ('rules') for where and how to stand to view the skull without the distortion. On the days that I attended the exhibition it seemed that many visitors were uncomfortable with returning to the doorway and crouching down in order to achieve the prescribed experience – perhaps because of the conventions of the space itself, the National Gallery, or indeed because of their own 'rules' of appropriate behaviour.

The model that I am suggesting here locates the meanings (multiple and layered) of site-specific performance at the intersection between three different sets of rules:

those of the performance, the space, and the spectators. A parallel for such a model can be found in Brith Gof's approach to its site-specific work, outlined by Clifford McLucas in his documentation of the 1995 performance *Tri Bywyd*:

The Host site is haunted for a brief time by a Ghost that the theatre makers create. Like all ghosts, it is transparent and Host can be seen through Ghost. Add into this a third term – the Witness – ie the audience, and we have a kind of a Trinity that constitutes The Work. It is the mobilisation of this Trinity that is important – not simply the creation of the ghost. All three are active components in the bid to make site-specific work. The Host, the Ghost and the Witness.

(McLucas 2000: 128)

Work proceeding from the basis of this model might begin by asking such questions as:

- How far does a performance work within the rules of a space and how far is its presence necessarily changing them?
- To what extent are the spectators familiar with the site, initiated into its rules and having already negotiated their own place or position with regard to that system, and to what extent are they, rather, unfamiliar, uninitiated?
- How does the performance communicate its rules of engagement to the spectators?
- Whose 'inner rules' emerge through the performance and how do these interact with other sets of inner rules?
- In what ways do multiple inner logics converge to create performative effects?

Figure 7: Bore Place brickworks



The anthropologist and archaeologist Barbara Bender suggests that the word ‘negotiation’ “rather neutralises potential confrontation, resistance, or subversion” (1998: 63). This objection serves to remind us that the negotiation process is rarely constituted of equal elements with an equal stake in the outcome; rather, the dialogue takes place between elements that are, in Bender’s words, “differentially empowered”. Space, performance and spectators will each have more or less effect on the meanings produced in different situations. Attempting to understand the nature of this balance and the factors that have influenced the balance in any given instance is an important part of the analysis process. My claim is that the exploration of spatial rules is a useful tool in reaching such an understanding.

The ethics of the rule

As a postscript to this discussion I want to point to some of the immediate practical and ethical implications that the notion of spatial rules holds for performance, reminding us again of those “differentially empowered” elements combining in the site-specific performance experience. Outside of the theatre building, the new spaces that performance seeks are encountered through a web of rules concerning issues of ownership and control, of who governs the territory and who is allowed access to it. Exeter-based site-specific collective Wrights & Sites were made acutely aware of such issues when they chose to work on the city’s (council-run) quayside for their 1998 project *The Quay Thing*. Reflecting on the experience, company member Simon Persighetti finds that

when we enter the public space or the field or the abandoned building new constraints quickly reveal themselves. We find that the ‘land of the free’ is not free; we discover that the horizon belongs to somebody. Every centimetre that surrounds you has been measured, allotted, bought, entered into the records upon written deeds. What this suggests is that artists who escape the gallery or the auditorium find themselves in other kinds of contract with land-lords and legislators. I speak of this not to deter the site-specific artist but to underline the need to see through the romantic image of the great outdoors or the rusty factory and to realise that it presents another kind of frame with its own peculiar sub-text and subsoil.

(Persighetti 2000: 12)

So performance might find itself in the position of trespasser, even in ostensibly 'public' space. The ethical implications of the rule, however, impact not only upon access to a site but also upon a performance's actions within, and representation of, a site.

Malcolm Miles sets up a useful distinction between the strategies of integration and intervention, both of which, he argues, can be adopted by public (specifically urban) art to "contribute to new models of urban dwelling, to new approaches to participation and community". I would suggest that a third category, linked to and overlapping both of these two, also exists, one that effects a kind of 'smoothing over' or 'untroubling' of a site. Though this might be considered an intervention of sorts, it actually works (albeit often unconsciously) to de-politicize the space and is therefore in opposition to the interventionist art that "is a form of continuing social criticism which resists the institutionalisation of conventional public sculpture" (Miles 1997: 205). Neither can this third strategy be considered wholly 'integration', because it needs to make (perhaps only subtle) changes to the site and its context before it can work to its own agenda. In the terms in which I have laid out the discussion of this chapter, it is a strategy that hides or seeks to ignore some of the rules of a site.

In his response to the survey documented in Chapter Two, Mark Evans of Coventry-based Storm Theatre engages with the possibility of inadvertently adopting this strategy.

We are always aware of our work as potentially 'sanitising' – bringing art in to 'civilise' a space and 'reveal' its hidden aesthetic qualities. This was very much brought home whilst 'cleaning up' drug-takers 'gear' before rehearsing on one site. As I swept up the needles and broken glass, I wondered to what extent this was sweeping other issues up too. Issues we were not able to address in that particular show.

Site-specific performance might then, in some instances, be figured as colonization, and we need to recognize what this might mean. This is not to argue that performance must respond to every rule of its site or articulate a position with regard to every possible interpretation of the space. In attempting to deal with so much, the performance would be able to explore very little. It is merely to point to an area of potential criticism that site-specific performance faces from those for whom the

ignored aspects are important, and to suggest that there is often a fine line between choosing to focus on particular aspects of a site and glossing over important social issues. A review of London Bubble's 2000 promenade production *Gilgamesh* illustrates this problem: "after leaving the performance, I stumbled across the results of a petrol bomb attack. One minute we were watching make-believe fire, the next minute we were witnessing a real one. It made me realise how far Bubble's show had failed to engage with the dark realities of urban life".²⁰

The performance that locates itself in an everyday setting is inviting others to experience its effects through a large and complex frame. For Mike Pearson,

[site-specific] performances are extremely generative of signs: the multiple meanings and readings of activity and site intermingle, amending and compromising one another. They reveal, celebrate, confound, criticize and make manifest the specifics of the site which begins to resemble a kind of saturated space or 'scene-of-crime', where, to use forensic jargon, 'everything is potentially important'.

(Pearson 1997: 96)

If, in the crime-scene imagery used here, "everything is potentially important", it is perhaps the job of the performance (like that of the skilled detective) to find a means of indicating what is important in this instance, for this performance.

Una Chaudhuri (1995) aligns environmental theatre, an important predecessor of the site-specific mode, with a political ideology of resourcism, in which space becomes 'raw material' for use by the artist. The model of negotiation outlined above advocates a principle that attempts to work against such an ideology, shifting site from 'source' or 'resource' to an active, though sometimes recalcitrant, participant in the negotiation of an ethics as well as a poetics of the event. Thus the concept of rules, and of dialogue between rules, developed in this chapter begins to create a complex discursive framework within which we might position site-specific performance.

¹ I have used the term 'landscape' deliberately here because, though it might stand simply as an alternative word for space, place, location and so on, it also implies a shift away from the predominantly urban contexts of much relevant theory and signals "a relationship between person and environment" (Rodaway 1994: 64). But see Rodaway (127) for an argument that, given the term's specific socio-historical meanings, it should only be used in contexts where a visual sense of space is required. I am interested here in the ways that my use of the term might reference visual contexts, but largely because I want to move to contrasting or supplementing these with other embodied experiences of site.

² The notion of 'rules' has also proved useful in generating a framework within which contemporary devised performance might be understood. Mike Pearson, for example, has used this idea to perform a range of functions in his investigations into spatial practices: rules of performance are seen to ensure "coherence, direction and momentum as well as implying the threat of transgression" (1997: 91) and to engender productive balances and tensions in the communication between performers (2001: 19); rules might also be understood as a structuring strategy in devised performance (2001: 26) or, in a different sense, in terms of theatre's rules of "prudence and decorum" from which site-specificity finds freedom (1997: 95). This sets up a rule-based relationship between site-specificity and 'theatreness' that is taken up later in the chapter when I discuss the principle of negotiation.

³ Bill Hillier's research has been influential in the 'space syntax' method, which "deals directly with the layout of buildings and street patterns and forecasts the way in which these will be used by people moving around them" (www.spacesyntax.com). The results of this "evidence-based approach" to social spaces are used to develop the "strategic design of buildings and urban areas". Space Syntax operates as a limited company, allied to a long-term research project at The Bartlett, University College London.

⁴ In keeping with the epistemological concerns of this thesis, we might ask whether de Certeau himself is a strategist or a tactician. Though we might recognize in his discussion the rhetorical turns that he characterizes as tactical, the type of knowledge developed through his theorizing does seem able to perform the strategic function of "transform[ing] the uncertainties of history [and of everyday practices] into readable spaces" (36).

⁵ See Edward Soja (1989) on Los Angeles, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (1995) on London, and Barbara Bender (1998) on Stonehenge. These studies arise from social theory/urban planning, cultural geography, and archaeology/anthropology respectively.

⁶ This comment by Susan Benn (for whom Bore Place was her family home) is taken from an interview that I had with her during a Performing Arts Lab at Bore Place in October 1999. The Lab was part of the Media Plus funded, European Commission supported project in media arts directed in 1999-2000 by Frank Boyd, Lizbeth Goodman and Susan Benn.

⁷ Susan Melrose (1994) writes of the Warner/Shaw/Sophocles *Electra* - 1988-9: "The production was schematic from one spectator position I chose (above the doors leading into and out of the spectator space), so that the *mise en scene* dominated and 'spoke' the name of the *metteur en scene* as primary agent (or 'actor') in every proposition I produced about it. From a second spectator position however – lower and to the side – no bird's eye view was possible. In this second experience of the production, the flow of blending bodies with which I was almost level – I looked past and through, rather than down on them – avoided the clear, schematic articulation of what remained, indisputably, 'the same' effective global control. The production was strangely 'everyday human' from the second position, but the means to this transformation are wholly spatial" (153). This raises the issue of the plurality of spectatorial positions and of the need to acknowledge the particular position in any one instance. It also serves to introduce for us the notion of choices available as part of the role traditionally defined as 'passive receiver', by emphasizing the choice that is exercised by each spectator in deciding where to sit. The different interpretations that Melrose offers based on her "shift in perception" illustrate the enormous role that relationships between spectator and performance across and within the place of performance have in forming experiences of that performance. This is only problematic if we are searching for neat summations of each performance bound by the definite article: 'the' meaning, 'the'

spectatorial experience, etc. The implications of the shifting spectatorial experience are taken up here in Chapter Six.

⁸ For Brand (1994), the image of buildings as permanent, solid structures is an illusion, and he draws upon the double use of the word 'building' as both noun and action of a verb to suggest that: "whereas 'architecture' may strive to be permanent, a 'building' is always building and rebuilding. The idea is crystalline, the fact fluid" (2). Brand advocates an "adaptive architecture" (190) which recognizes a building as a temporal as well as a spatial whole and which plans and designs accordingly. If we accept the suggestion of his metaphor, believing that buildings do indeed 'learn' and evolve, any examination of what a building 'is' must necessarily be carried out through temporal as well as spatial dimensions.

⁹ It is worth noting that the walled garden is a culturally specific spatial construction linked, in Britain, to the English stately home. In their study of *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (1977), the Americans Bloomer and Moore discuss the spatial significance of the garden, writing that: "outside lies the strangely ubiquitous phenomenon of the American open lawn. Not walled as the gardens of Europe or the Near East ... The lawn in some ways recalls the personal envelope of space that we usually try to maintain around our bodies" (3).

¹⁰ The north section of Bore Place house was removed by a Mr Aymer Vallance at the beginning of the twentieth century and used to become part of Stoneacre House at Otham, Kent. Martin Conway (1930a and b) traces the various parts of the hybrid Stoneacre House to more than one Kent building, noting that the timber framing, the woodwork on the west front, the "large oriel window, with the overhanging gable above it", the library door, and the stone fireplace in the south-west bedroom are all taken from Bore Place, "re-erected just as ... in the original".

¹¹ Other examples of this cycle of processes include the fact that compost produced by the on-site Super Natural Ltd. is used in the gardens, as is "liquid feed produced on site using slurry from the farm's dairy herd", and the permaculture garden includes "brick paths from Bore Place clay; a timber framed and clad shed using oak from Bore Place woodlands" (quotes from the Commonwork website at www.commonwork.org). The hand-made brick business uses clay from the site, thereby transforming this site and moving it to other places.

¹² *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (15th edn., revised by Adrian Room).

¹³ Ruth Wylie, 'The Green Man: Variations on a Theme'. *At the Edge* no. 4, 1996.

¹⁴ William Anderson & Clive Hicks. *Green Man: The Archetype of our Oneness with the Earth*. Compassbooks, 1998.

¹⁵ www.spacesyntax.com

¹⁶ For an analysis of the historical and cultural positioning of these conventions and the effect they have on what can and cannot be done in the theatre, see Alan Read's chapter 'Combustion: Fire and Safety' in *Theatre and Everyday Life* (1993: 228-236).

¹⁷ We might note that this "transformation of space into place" mirrors in some aspects that proposed by de Certeau, but for Schechner the terms are reversed and place becomes the more dynamic term.

¹⁸ We return in more detail to the image of archaeology as it intersects with the repertoire of a site in Chapter Four, where I discuss the relationship of site-specific performance to memory.

¹⁹ Created by Adam Dawe of Wimbledon School of Art.

²⁰ Lyn Gardner, 'Urban Myth'. *The Guardian*. Wednesday 2 August 2000.

Chapter Four: Weaving Spatial Memory

History, Tourism and Representation

Memory is the fabric through which time is rendered continuous, through which the present and the past are interwoven and interdependent.

(Marita Sturken, 'The Space of Electronic Time')

millennium n a thousand years; a thousandth anniversary, millenary; the thousand years after the second coming of Christ; (usu ironical) a coming golden age.

(The Chambers Dictionary)

As the year 2000 approached, many agendas in Britain (those, for example, of the government, regional councils and the media) began to focus on issues of performance and especially site-specific performance, though of course these weren't the terms that were used to frame the discussions. Questions of *how* and, crucially, *where* the millennium should be performed – to ourselves and to others – were no less prominent for thousands of small-event planners around the country than for those debating the economics, politics and possibilities of flagship projects such as the Millennium Dome and the London Eye. Exactly *what* was being performed here also merits enquiry: an image of a centralized (Great) Britain, perhaps, or a new picture created out of devolution; a set of (official or marginalized) pasts, a celebration of the present or a prognosis for the future; a list of achievements or a means of entering into dialogue with (versions of) history. In each case, problems of representation are brought to the fore; the level and ferocity of debate surrounding the Dome demonstrates the public's investment in theatrical dilemmas concerning the implications of choosing one mode of representation over another and the ways in which this might be 'read'.

Any number of projects, explicitly performative or otherwise, might be chosen to investigate these issues further. In this chapter, I discuss two performance events that, in different ways, engaged with notions of commemoration, history and representation in the context of the millennium celebrations in Britain: the *York Millennium Mystery*

Plays and Mike Pearson's *Bubbling Tom*. At the same time, both events raise questions concerning heritage and the role of the tourist in such a context.

Moving beyond the specific context of the millennium, this chapter asks wider questions about the intrinsic relationship between site-specific performance and memory. To do this, it makes use of a metaphor of weaving, which seems pertinent in a number of ways. In his discussion of Proust, for example, Walter Benjamin suggests that “the important thing for the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection” (1992: 198). Benjamin therefore usefully undermines any sense of the naturalness or inevitability of memory and alerts us instead to the practical and aesthetic decision-making required of the remembering theatre practitioner. The linking of memory, weaving and artistry also has a precedent in Nazca cultures, where “the complex textiles structures” evolved in the “Pre-Columbian cultures of Peru” were “based on numerical pattern systems stored in memory” (Brown 2000: 49). With this in mind, the performances discussed here, together with the narratives generated by them (including this one), might be a means of passing on not only memories but also certain systems for remembering. We might also note (as Walter Ong does; 1982: 13) that *text* is derived from the same root as *textile*: ‘texere’ – to weave. The academic writing process of drawing together might therefore be imagined as an act of weaving: in this case, threads of memory and place, performance and representation, history and heritage are woven into a (sometimes incongruous) text(ile) that might fruitfully be recalled in the analysis of future site-specific performances. Finally, picking up on the concept of negotiation proposed in the previous exploration, we might position the process of weaving here as itself a negotiation, whereby mainstream and marginal practices are laced together in my construction of a scholarly narrative of memory and site. In this way, the critical apparatus of this chapter is in direct dialogue with the practices on which it is focused.

Figure 8: Penelope



The sponge

In setting out a context of connections between sites and memory I want to return to the premise (discussed in Chapter One) that the theatre space is never 'empty'. Here, an implicit question echoes: what, then, might it be said to contain?

The city [consists] of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past ...

As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands. A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira's past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand...

(Calvino 1997: 10-11)

If, following Italo Calvino, we accept the suggestion that spaces contain their pasts "like the lines of a hand", the role of performance might in some ways be that of medium: reading and interpreting the "wave of memories" that it finds. The image of the medium is useful because it hints at the multiple and contradictory interpretations that might be made, the intertwining of present and past, and the fallibility of memory. In other words, this image introduces some important notions of spiritualism that are at the same time, at least for me, undercut by an implicit scepticism. Though I want to draw on cultural ideas of spaces as storehouses of memory, I also want to sidestep the danger of literalism by presenting this concept initially through the ways in which it operates in fiction.

A trope of detective fiction asserts that the place in which a crime occurred not only holds clues but acts as witness to the events and 'stores' the memory of these. Umberto Eco draws on this trope in *The Name of the Rose*, in which the abbey can be read as a series of signs ("the evidence through which the world speaks to us like a great book" (Eco 1998: 23)) enabling the mystery of the place to be solved. In another literary genre, Daphne du Maurier's *The House on the Strand* relies on its reader's understanding that the house of the title has remembered all that once happened within its walls and can play these events back for the present inhabitants almost in the manner of an interactive film. And Gregory Ulmer, in his discussion of David Lynch's avant-garde horror film, *Eraserhead*, writes:

Asked to name the single greatest influence on his work, Lynch replied without hesitation, "Philadelphia". ... Lynch explained that the film sprang

fully formed out of a single intuitive impression of this place: “My original image was of a man’s head bouncing on the ground, being picked up by a boy and taken to a pencil factory. I don’t know where it came from”. ... Lynch never mentions whether or not he knew that the idea to attach an eraser to the head, tip, or end of a graphite-clay pencil, accomplished in 1858, is credited to Hyman Lipman of Philadelphia. Where did Lynch’s idea come from? From Philadelphia itself, perhaps, where Lynch’s noted sensitivity to the effects of “place” – to the ghost, spirit, or *ker* of place – caused him to reanimate Lipman’s original insight as nightmare.

(Ulmer 1994: 123-5)

Notions of spatial memory are, then, variously played out in detective fiction and horror cinema; such notions are explored also in the work of London-based writer Iain Sinclair and in the travel writing of Jan Morris, who maintains, for instance, that

music can permanently influence a building, so I often leave the record player on when I am out of the house, allowing its themes and melodies to soak themselves into the fabric.

(cited in Theroux 1983: 181)

Each of these genres might connect in different ways with a range of site-specific practices, but in this chapter I will be concerned with the particular means that performance has at its disposal – in the live and time-based encounter it stages between space, performance and audience – that enable it to probe issues of site and memory.

“A popular stand-by of writers of detective stories over the years has been the witness who is unable to recall some crucial piece of information until the cunning detective hits on the idea of reconstructing the exact situation in which the incident occurred, whereupon all comes flooding back. Such a device did indeed play a central role in the first ever detective novel, The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins. But is there any foundation to the belief that context may have such powerful effect? In fact there is.”

(Alan Baddeley, ‘Memory and Context’ in Gregory, R. (ed) The Oxford Companion to the Mind (OUP 1987)).

There are clear links between these ideas and the concept of the ‘repertoire’, introduced in Chapter Three, in which a range of possible actions and ideas is suggested by the histories of a particular place. But the place-as-container metaphor that the repertoire can lead to should not imply an unproblematic store of memory existing only to be tapped into. As Barbara Bender has shown in her study of Stonehenge, one site can evoke memories and histories made up of “a multitude of

voices and landscapes through time” and these fragments are “differentially empowered”, “political, dynamic and contested” (1998: 131). This chapter is particularly concerned with the ways in which memories are combined with current agendas and animated as narratives. Each space, also, is cross-referenced with our experiences of other spaces, inviting us to ask how the memory of one space might be told through another. The lines from Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* that open this section make a distinction between *telling* and *containing* a past, aiming to convey a sense that a space’s memory is deeply sedimented rather than superficial. But performance, in order to deal with the *contained* memories of a site, must find some way of *telling* them. In doing so, a choice is made between what to tell, what to leave buried or perhaps to erase, and what other memories to import into the space. Similar choices are made when animating, as analysis or documentation, memories of a performance now past.

Theatre and space: performing memory

When performance moves out of the traditional theatre building it is inevitably locating itself within the cultural context outlined above, in which places are figured as containers of memories, stories and legends and can be brought to ‘speak’ of the events of their pasts. More specifically, I have suggested that discourses surrounding the millennium provide a useful context for unravelling related issues of commemoration, heritage and representation. In order to discuss how theatre might both work within and deconstruct these contexts, the remainder of the chapter is structured around two performance events of the year 2000 occurring in spaces other than designated theatres: *The York Millennium Mystery Plays* (York Minster) and *Bubbling Tom* (in a North Lincolnshire village). I argue that the two performances seek to weave together a number of understandings of spatial memory, albeit in often strikingly different ways.

The pattern that I want to identify in the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* (June – July 2000) emerges from its particular combination of different threads, representing different agendas and hopes for the large-scale production. The problematics of authorship should be acknowledged here: while I have begun by identifying Mike Pearson as, in many ways, the author of *Bubbling Tom*, such identification is less easy

in this case, for reasons beyond the usual collaboration between artists involved in most theatre. Royal Shakespeare Company associate director Gregory Doran – in collaboration with designer Robert Jones – took artistic control of the production, and indeed these credentials were made prominent in much of the event's publicity. The project itself, however, was conceived by an organizing committee, reminiscent of the plays' original guild model of production whereby civic issues take precedence over theatrical concerns. It was this committee that took the decision to move away from the traditional pageant wagon format for this millennium production; the consequent utilization of York Minster signals not merely religious concerns but, more prominently, a sense of historical significance and national heritage.¹ In terms of both physical immensity and cultural association, therefore, the Minster looms large enough over the event to be considered as co-author of many of the meanings it produces. And the scripts themselves are a "Penelope work", both now – woven into a partial York Cycle through careful modern research into documentary records – and in the multiple authorship of their creation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Beadle 1994: 88-9). The *York Millennium Mystery Plays* might usefully, therefore, be discussed in terms of the construction of collective (and competing) memories.

By contrast, Mike Pearson's *Bubbling Tom* (April 2000) – which takes the form of a guided walk through his home village of Hibaldstow – appears to work through a straightforward identification between performer, text and place. In the live encounter between performance, site and audience, however, this pattern is complicated and displaced in a number of ways. Arguing that the performance relies on an understanding of space as, in photographer Ron McCormick's terms, "the site of mutual and collective memory, of history and competing tensions" (McCormick 1998: 4), I find that Pearson weaves a set of memories around his childhood home, simultaneously enjoying and subverting the effects of nostalgia. I will suggest that he does this by weaving deliberately loosely (leaving gaps in the fabric of the performance and leaving hanging threads that might be untangled) and by subtly undermining the cultural assumption that memory can be tapped into simply by recourse to the sites of its occurrence.

There are a number of reasons for my choice of these two particular performances here. One is quite simple, in that each involves a figure influential in, and arguably

representative of the best of, different spheres in contemporary British performance. Miwon Kwon has argued that “one of the narrative trajectories of all site-oriented projects is consistently aligned with the artist’s prior projects executed in other places” (2000: 54) and that this generates a further site in which to locate the work. In other words, it might be suggested that the performance history of the artist is carried as a memory, for both spectator and artist, into each new project. Mike Pearson, as former artistic director of the acclaimed Welsh experimental theatre company Brith Gof, has been creatively responsible for much of the exemplary work in this field in the 1980s and 1990s. The company has been particularly influential in the development of site-specific performance. Gregory Doran, through his work with the RSC, has influence as a leading director in Britain’s mainstream, building-based theatre. The other spaces that are recalled here, then, might be the post-industrial sites of Wales with which Brith Gof is arguably most associated (Kaye 1996: 209; see also Savill 1997 for a brief critical history of the company) and the patchwork of nineteenth and twentieth century theatre spaces at Stratford that serve as memorial (and heritage) sites as much as artistic centres.

Perhaps more significantly in the terms of the present study, each of the performances derives from, and draws upon the tropes of, an important body of practice that has led to the development of contemporary site-specific performance. In the case of Doran’s production, the relevant body of practice is the tradition of community theatre. Community theatre is connected to site-specific performance and to memory by, among others, Simon Persighetti, who states that “the notions we might connect with site specific work which emerged from community arts practice in the 70s and 80s are often related to the site by memory or reminiscence” (2000: 8). Pearson’s guided walk, on the other hand, can be located within a set of performance practices that derives from the everyday, from the blurring of ‘reality’ with ‘theatre’. By placing these two events together in this chapter I am able to weave some of the major threads of site-specific performance and to explore how these impact upon the ways in which space is performed and understood.

Both events can also be read through a wider framework of tourism, itself a useful category in discussing much site-specific performance. In recent years tourism and tourist sites have been treated as categories of analysis for geographers and cultural

theorists (see for example Rodaway 1995), fruitfully bringing issues of heritage, recreation, authenticity, identity and spatiality into dialogue. In considering the effect of these ideas on our understanding of site-specificity, what interests me especially is what happens to the spectator (who is often also a tourist) when a theatre event 'performs' a non-theatre site, when its functions or techniques merge with those of tourism (and this focus is taken up again and developed in Chapter Six). In an essay entitled 'City Sights/Sites of Memories and Dreams', Helen Liggett argues that "tourism is about fantasy: it makes the myth of a place real enough to ensure that tourists score a travel experience worth the time and effort" (Liggett 1995: 253-4). Heritage is a concern with creating this fantasy, animating this myth.

Choice of site frequently becomes linked with an ideal or problematic of verisimilitude. Marvin Carlson identifies the quest for verisimilitude as one of the reasons for theatrical performances to take place outside of theatre buildings (along with reasons of "limited traditional theatre spaces and the desire of experimental directors to experiment with nonconventional venues" (1989: 27)). This he associates with the spatial ideologies of the romantics and the realists, where "exact locality" is thought to "engrave the faithful impression of facts on the soul of the spectator" (Victor Hugo, cited in Carlson 1989: 27). But how much can be gained from this type of literalism? It cannot seek to "trouble the oppositions between the site and the work" or to act out "a writing over of sites already written on" (Kaye 2000: 11). Is it therefore a reduction of what site-specific performance can and might be? Or is it doing something else in terms of heritage and of layering? Can it effect a questioning of the site's implications? Or must it always be an acceptance? One answer to such questions as these might be found in Nick Kaye's analysis of the strategies of Michelangelo Pistoletto's minimalist gallery installations and Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections onto city buildings and monuments. Kaye suggests that:

"both these strategies approach 'site' by working over the disjunction between the reading of space and the experience of space. In blurring the distinctions between the virtual space of a work and the real spaces in which the viewer acts, these strategies expose the performance of the places into which they intervene."

(41)

In cases where the represented space and the space of performance are ostensibly the same, the aim need not be to make invisible the mode of presentation in order to achieve a sense of realism. An apparent 'exact fit' between these two orders of space can be shifted through the tool of performance to reveal the disjunction between them. What appears to be something of a 'belt and braces' approach, hammering home the meanings of a production by the equation of virtual and literal spaces, might instead reveal the different orders of memory that are used to construct a place, exposing, as Nick Kaye argues, the performance of the place into which the work intervenes.

The performances I focus on here both negotiate, in different ways, between the problems and possibilities of heritage and their specific theatrical contexts. The implications of notions of tourism, then, will reverberate through my discussion of each event.

Finally, I find that the two events offer a useful contrast in dealing with themes of memory. *Bubbling Tom* and the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* employ different notions of memory as well as different senses of 'located-ness' or being 'in place' and therefore enable me to foreground alternative ways in which the issues of this chapter have been explored in performance. There is a marked contrast in scale between the two events. *Bubbling Tom* was commissioned as one of a number of 'Small Acts at the Millennium'² – through its title the performance series enters into a discourse of commemoration, simultaneously seeking to mark the millennium while implicitly critiquing other, 'bigger' acts of commemoration. The millennium is invoked here as an impetus for creating, challenging and asserting a range of 'official' and 'counter' memories. The premise of this project, then, seems to set it up in direct contrast to large-scale events such as the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*. *Bubbling Tom*, "intended for an audience who need know nothing of the niceties and conventions of contemporary theatre and art practice" (Pearson 2000: 176) was a small-scale, intimate event that took place over two nights with audiences of no more than thirty, predominantly family and friends of the performer; the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*, on the other hand, sold out every night for a month with audiences filling the immense cathedral in which the event occurred. We might also consider the two performances in terms of contrasting images of the country village and the city (Williams 1975) and the different modes of memory and stories associated with each.

Comparing these two events, then, leads me to compare different types of memory: notions of popular memory, collective memory, cultural memory and personal memory. As memory thus becomes harder and harder to discuss as a single entity, we find that we need likewise to think about the memory-related issues of commemoration, heritage and nostalgia. This dispersal of meaning prompts a number of research questions for this chapter. What type of memory is invoked in these performances? What function does memory serve and what status is it accorded? Is there room for multiple sets of memories or does one emerge dominant? And what

about my memories (of the performance events, of my interactions with these spaces)? How can I write these?

Constructing the collective: *York Millennium Mystery Plays*

"A passionate, spiritual journey... a powerful theatrical event. This special Millennium production of the York Mystery Plays will be directed by Gregory Doran, Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company and staged, for the first time ever, in the magnificent surroundings of York Minster – the largest Gothic Cathedral in Northern Europe"

(leaflet advertising the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*)

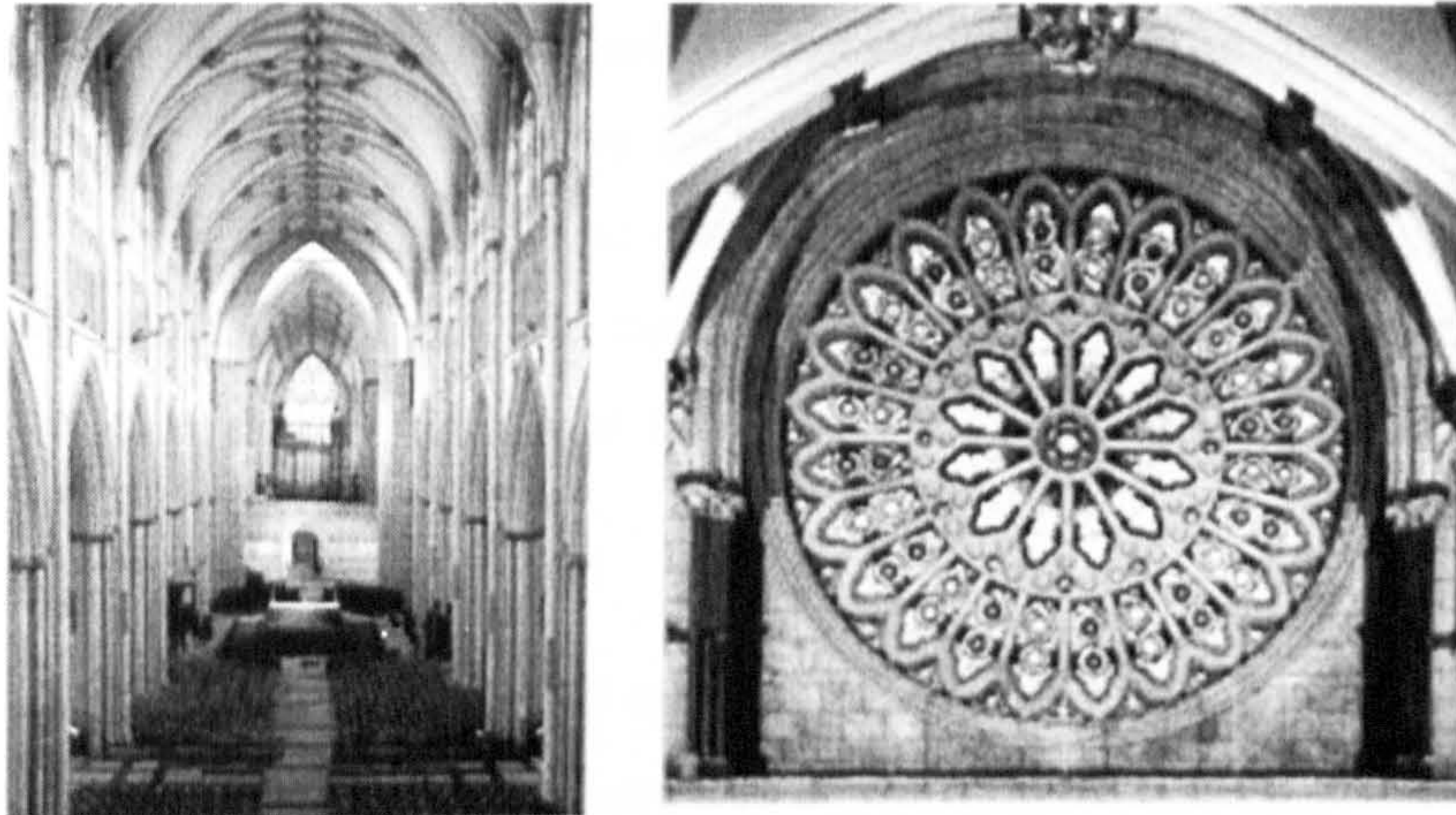
When the York Mystery Plays were first performed the experience was an itinerant one, for audience and for performers. These 'wagon productions' charted a designated route through the medieval city, and offered the spectator a choice of viewing patterns in some ways analogous to modern video: not restricted to watching the entire cycle from one 'station' or stopping point, the spectator might follow one section of the cycle in order to 're-play' it, miss out episodes, disrupt chronology and construct an individual sequence by walking between stations in an order not prescribed, take a break and then start up where she or he left off at the appropriate station later in the day, watch only favourite segments, or even "if one or two episodes were missed, one could always catch up on them the following year" (Twycross 1994: 45). The plays were performed in this format until the late sixteenth century and revived in 1951 for the Festival of Britain. They are now presented in York every two years and, since 1988, experiments with pageant wagon staging have become the norm. Though the medieval precedent for performance within churches is the liturgical drama rather than the mystery plays, usually incorporated into religious services or ceremonies (Beadle 1994), the special production of the plays in the year 2000 deviated from their traditional journey format by being relocated to the interior of York Minster. It is notable, then, that the advertising for this production encourages us to think of the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* as a "passionate, spiritual journey" at the same time as the physical journey is removed from the experience. The decision to locate the millennium production inside the Minster and to use the end-on format of the traditional theatre building is also a decision to change the patterns of spectatorship facilitated by the performance. Similarly, the change in site marks a shift in the types of memory invoked and brought into dialogue with the

performance texts. And as the role of passers-by is removed from the possibilities for the identities inhabited by the audience, so the role of congregation is added.

A leaflet advertising the production states that it is “a memorable way to celebrate our dramatic heritage”. In practice, though, the dramatic legacy inherited by this millennial production is more than just the nostalgic veneration of a centuries-old performance tradition implied in this statement. Any new production of medieval mystery plays necessarily enters into a dialogue not only with twentieth-century scholarly discoveries about original staging conventions but also with the wealth of modern re-interpretations of the plays (The National Theatre’s *The Mysteries* (1985), based on Tony Harrison’s reworking of the York cycle and described as “one of the most significant and talked-about theatrical events of the 1980s” (Marshall 1994: 294), the 1983 Leeds experimentation with original staging practices of the Chester cycle, the many productions in York since 1951, and Passion plays across the country). By relocating the plays within York Minster the production also inherits the weight of that site’s associations: the cathedral as Western symbol, the spatial dynamics of the cathedral, and the particular history of York Minster itself.

The significance of the cathedral as site reverberates throughout Doran’s production. In its mobilization in support of a variety of religious, civic and national identities, the cathedral as symbol already constitutes a performance of space: a performance that seeks to perpetuate a set of beliefs and ‘ways of being’ in relation to its site. In both its physical aspects, including the vivid imagery that it embodies, and its cultural position as the symbol of a city (in the past, the legal symbol that conferred city status), the cathedral serves as a focal point for a community. As storyteller and as storehouse the cathedral performs civic identity and collective memory. Its spatial layout holds religious significance; its symbolic architectural design is inscribed with religious and social memory.

The symbolic center of the medieval town was the cathedral, and nowhere else in the city was so rich a trove of symbolic referents concentrated. A famous passage in Hugo’s *Notre Dame de Paris* considers the cathedral as the central repository of signs for its culture. Legend, allegory, doctrine, the whole sum of medieval knowledge of the world, divine and human, was here represented in painting, sculpture, stained glass, and space. At the same time this fabric of symbols, rich as it was, also served as a setting, a

Figure 9: the nave and Rose Window of York Minster

container for the even more central symbolic systems of the performed rituals of the church, by which the citizens of the city were led to a direct participation in the divine mysteries.

(Carlson 1989: 14)

As a repository and performer of a collective cultural memory, however, the cathedral is historically and culturally bound. It is a particularly western symbol that, due to the strong feelings attached to it through religion and politics, carries vastly different meanings for different people in different places and at different times. Inclusion, however, always implies a simultaneous exclusion against which it is measured, and so the notion of a collective memory contains the suggestion that there will be those who do not share or subscribe to this set of memories. So, if the cathedral is indeed all of the things I have indicated it might be, a number of questions are raised: for whom does the cathedral signify in this way? who is in a position to read its symbols? are there counter-readings available and what effect might these have?

The performative roles occupied by the spectators of the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* are created not only out of their relationship to the symbolic and cultural status of the cathedral in general, but also out of their specific position with regard to York Minster and its particular history and associations.³ The Minster represents its own historical narrative, which may be reinforced, disrupted or ignored by the spectator coming to the performance with a set of personal memories. The strongest images that I associated with York Minster prior to visiting it in July 2000 were of fire and glass: the fire of 1984 that destroyed much of the roof, and the Rose Window (Figure

9) – one of the most famous sights within the cathedral – a symbol both of the fight for local identity and the successful connection of this identity with those of neighbouring regions.⁴ Others may have held the same images in their mind when thinking of the place, or alternative ones derived from a mix of social, cultural and personal memories. The point is that these images informed my experience of the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* as much as did my prior knowledge of the plays themselves.

York Minster, then, stands not only as a site inviting deep religious reflection but also as a site of multiple modes of memory and as a commodity with a particular value in terms of the heritage it represents, a value that held added significance at the turn of the millennium. These complex ways of interacting with the Minster are reflected in the performance itself, which was categorized differently for and by different groups involved in the project. In a performance ostensibly celebrating unity of purpose and a dominant mode of remembering, diverse and often contesting memories created a multi-authored work of weaving that could be read and experienced through a number of frames of reference. I want, then, to explore the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*' performance of space and memory by referring to a set of different approaches to it: those of the director, the designer and the organizing committee, together with my own approach as spectator and as tourist in York. This latter context leads to a reconsideration of the production's construction of a collective memory through theories of heritage and its relationship to the past(s).

The Director

Gregory Doran describes his approach in an article published as part of the programme for the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* entitled 'Working with the Minster', this title itself providing a clue to the director's site-specific agenda. Opening with a recollection of annual childhood journeys across the Pennines to York and the Minster on Corpus Christi, Doran proceeds to engage with the personal memory of others as a means of unlocking the Minster's secrets and discovering its hidden corners. His preparation for the production saw him guided by the headmaster of the Minster School "up a dusty spiral staircase" through a "tiny door" to the "narrow gallery that spans the Great East Window", shown around tour guide Peter Dench's "favourite corners of the building", and discussing with one of the Minster's

glaziers the stained glass “medieval face of God” that, as reported through Doran’s historicized sensibility, “stared through the centuries and spoke to me now at the end of the 20th century”. Each encounter with another’s performance of the site adds not only to a rich source of imagery for the production but also to a sense that the site is created out of layers of personal memory as well as those memories that we might categorize as collective: historical, popular and cultural. Assuming that each of Doran’s guides was in some way a spectator of the performance (the headmaster of the Minster School was, in fact, the composer of original music for the production), each came to the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* with a personal relationship to the site feeding the experience. This inclusion of personal memories at the preparation stage seems to pave the way for the personal approaches of the spectators. And Doran’s own position with regard to the religious meanings of his performance site (“I have to declare that, like many others, I turned my back on the Church in which I was brought up”) legitimates and recognizes other relationships to both text and site.

If coming to see these Plays is an act of faith or of curiosity, whether your interest in the Plays is cultural or spiritual, civic duty or family pride, I hope you enjoy the event.

(Gregory Doran, programme notes)

Interrupting some of Doran’s own weaving, however, is another thread generated out of both aesthetic and pragmatic considerations of design and scenography.

The Designer

Working closely with Doran, Robert Jones as designer drew inspiration from the space. The colours used in the costume design were deliberately chosen to echo those in the cathedral’s magnificent stained glass. The built stage area (using five levels joined by steps) echoes in colour and in the step effect the surrounding arches of the Minster itself. The organ pipes form the backdrop to this built stage (and the organ itself is played as part of the specially composed music for the production). One of the most striking theatrical effects – a rainbow lighting effect used after the flood and again at the end of the last judgement, where the roof behind and above the stage was lit with seven coloured strips of light merging into one – makes particular use of the arched, ridged ceiling of the Minster. All of this is in keeping with Jones’s assertion

that his design “is a direct response to the sheer, breathtaking scale of the Minster’s architecture”.

However, his statement (again in the programme notes) that he needed to design a stage because “there is no existing performance space, as such, within the Minster” ignores the fact that the altar and other parts of the space are quite specifically performance spaces in religious ceremonies. In a very real sense, and for huge numbers of people across historical periods, the Minster has provided a space of performance: a site in which civic and religious pride, local identity and political contentions have been rehearsed and acted out. This notion of religious building as performance space is discussed by Lisa Lewis in a performative exploration of identity, place and family relationships. Constantly returning to the image of her grandfather preaching in the same Welsh chapel in which she later presents her paper at a performance conference, Lewis reflects that

the pulpit... became, for a long time, the focal point of the main performance space for Welsh communities, obliterating other performance tendencies – probably more by its accessibility and popularity, than through religious morality. An enclosed, claustrophobic place for the minister – for it was the minister’s sermon rather than the ritual of any sacrament or service that became the main performance component. A place to oscillate between preaching and testifying. The space is theatrical – the stairs leading to the elevated pulpit, the *sedd fawr* a miniature stage complete with audience of reverential men, themselves being watched by the main congregation, whose positioning is inclusive, encompassing. At one time, audience participation was paramount.

(Lewis 2000: 43)

While the specific religious and social context in a Welsh chapel differs from that of an English cathedral, the memory of performative associations of this type is built in to western churches and suggests a potential approach for site-specific theatre. By finding no stage with wings and footlights in York Minster and therefore deciding that it has no performance space the designer fails to explore many forms that the cathedral might take and meanings it might hold for a proportion of the audience. His decision, however, alerts us to the contradictory assumptions underpinning conceptions of performance in religious and theatrical contexts. Jones’s building of a stage and raised seating area within the Minster responds to the commercial demands of a contemporary theatre code, which asserts that performance is primarily a visual

medium and that theatrical space should therefore be organized around a principle of clarity of 'sightlines'.⁵ In other words, one of the aims behind this production's staging was to ensure that as many people as possible would be able to see the performance. By contrast, as a look at the interior layout of almost any church will confirm, the performance of worship is of a different order, in which the significance of visibility may be diminished in favour of other aspects of the experience – aural, perhaps, or communal, or otherwise atmospheric.

*Fiona,
I wonder whether the pulpit is really a stage? Defined by a Protestant religion of the word against a 'Papist' ritual, is the pulpit not intended as an offstage, from which the director (minister) steers the actors (congregation, priesthood of all believers) through God's text/narrative of salvation.
Phil⁶*

The Organizing Committee

It is worth noting the unusual circumstances behind this production, for it was organized by a committee, whose chairman was the Dean of York. This committee represents a further set of approaches to the event, concerned less with the architectural layout and the symbolic meanings of the Minster or the theatrical possibilities offered by the plays themselves than with the meanings that the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* might allow to cluster around York itself. High on the agenda of the committee was the wish to prioritize a Christian message at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and to this end the choice of site seems an attempt to emphasize the religious aspects of the plays over the popular and the civic. However, the committee was also keen to maintain the "local feel" of the plays, and to provide education packages and professional work experience opportunities for York inhabitants. Such features were used to support and enhance the model of the 'community play' to which the production adhered. If the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* performance does not always engage with questions of space and place in the way that, for example, Nick Kaye (2000) would recognize as site-specific, it is perhaps more in this tradition of community theatre that the production finds its version of site-specificity; that is, it is at some points more specific to York as a whole than to the spatial features of the Minster. The history of the plays themselves, the guild format of medieval performance and the revival of the plays from 1951 all link

the plays intrinsically with York. In their original format the York Mystery Plays may be described as community theatre (Marshall 1994: 292-3): the plays were divided among the craft guilds of York and the resulting performance was as much a celebration of civic as of religious identity. The format of community theatre is retained in this 2000 production. The large cast was formed predominantly of local amateur actors, many of whom had performed in the plays in previous years, with the result that the speech is delivered for the most part in Yorkshire accents (with even some dialect phrases ('eee, by gum') added to the performance text). Any attempt to read the performance through space, then, must deal with the extended site, York, as well as the specific site, the Minster.

This extended site was the chief focus for the committee, but the emphasis on York is outward- as well as inward-looking, and the need to sell the city in a tourist market was also therefore part of the committee's agenda. Here York Minster stands as tourist attraction as well as religious symbol, and it is important to remember that above all the plays were also to have the function of tourist attraction, providing a reason to visit York.⁷

The Spectator

And what of my memories? Given the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*' emphasis on *seeing*, discussed above, it is perhaps unsurprising that what I remember most after the event is in the form of still images; these theatrically striking images are inseparable from the cathedral in which I encountered them: the creation (making use

**Figure 10: the ark,
*York Millennium
Mystery Plays* (2000)**



of all the levels of the stage, a picture was created of God surrounded by planets, sky with sun, trees, earth with plants, sea and fish) and the flood (Noah's ark on the central level was surrounded above and below by a sea created using long sections of blue, floaty material manipulated to form 'waves' – Figure 10). Why have these images in particular remained sharp for me after other sections of the performance itself have begun to blur in my memory? It is true that they were visually spectacular; the sort of moments that the press,

responding very favourably to the production, described as stunning. But more than this, I think that these images spoke directly to the images I already associated with York Minster: fire and glass. In both its colours and its composition the creation scene resembled a stained-glass window, while the sight of ‘water’ filling the floor of the Minster seemed in some way to mirror the earlier, historical, memory of the roof on fire. Another snapshot that I still hold in my memory is of the last supper scene: as Judas introduces the scene of Jesus and the disciples together before his betrayal, the actors move out from their huddle, two of them holding either end of a white sheet held to look like a cloth over a long table, and all assume positions to recreate the shape of the da Vinci painting. The use of the painterly image draws on cultural and religious iconography that echoes the symbolism of the cathedral space as reinterpreted through art.

To talk of isolated ‘snapshots’ in this way, though, seems very unlike the weaving metaphor I have been using; appropriately so, perhaps, given that those aspects to which the critics responded – the aesthetics of what happened on the stage – remain quite separate from the more intricate web of relationships between places, people and memories woven elsewhere by the event.

I end this discussion, then, by turning elsewhere, to consider how the various pasts and presents of the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* might be understood through a discourse that has built up around museums and heritage sites. I have suggested that my own memory of the performance cannot be separated from York Minster, but neither can it be separated from my experience of York as a whole. The *York Millennium Mystery Plays* might be considered as one part of my touristic experience over a weekend visit to York, with the suggestion that this is likely to represent a typical mode of spectatorship for this event.

One version of York’s past is famously created at the city’s Jorvik Centre, whose dependence on a combination of notions of authenticity and continuity bears comparison with the strategies of the *Plays*. At both sites the visitor/spectator is invited to experience a particular, carefully staged means of performing the city and its memory. Described by Paul Rodaway as a combination of “archaeological research and theme-park dark-ride technology” (1995: 254), the Jorvik Centre takes

its visitor on a tour in a 'time-car' through the museum's spaces, accompanied by a recorded commentary provided by Magnus Magnusson. The emphasis is on re-creating scenes from York's everyday life in Viking times through engaging the sight, hearing and sense of smell of the visitor and focusing on archaeological images of layers and on lines of continuity. Specifically, two lines are emphasized in the museum's performance of its artefacts: the horizontal line drawn by the journey of the time-cars through the chronologically-arranged historical tableaux, and the vertical line through the layers of earth displaying the accretions of the centuries. If this is a re-enactment, the movement that activates it is that of the spectator rather than any live performers; nonetheless, the Jorvik Centre's performance of a spatial past aligns it with what have become known as 'heritage sites'. The strategies it employs, however, derive from a mix of such sites and more conventional museum layouts: following the time-car ride, the visitor is taken to a room of glass-case archaeological finds, via an area detailing some of the centre's current research. As a museum, then, some of the effects of the Jorvik Centre might be understood through Richard Crownshaw's comments on the museum's capacity to perform memory.⁸ He suggests that the display of artefacts invokes

memory work in the spectator that can never fully realize the museum's intentions, given the nature of artefactuality, leaving space for the spectator's more personal interpretation of artefacts, memories of events they did not necessarily experience, and intervention in a collective memory. ... Spectatorship allows an intervention in collective memory that, potentially, allows the remembrance of what the museum forgets.

(2000: 23)

Crownshaw offers us a way into considering how there might be room within an apparent celebration of a linear collective memory for the spectatorial process to disrupt this linearity and to engage new memories. But some would argue that such intervention is less possible at heritage sites, which use a form of memory that differs from that of the traditional museum and create a more overt performance of this memory. Much analysis has questioned the ideas underpinning the heritage site; Doreen Massey, for example, suggests that, at the typical heritage site,

a particular reading (sometimes more than one) of those social relations which constituted that particular space-time is preserved, and re-presented. ... [T]he classic heritage site ... restricts the room for interpretation and imagination. Instead of questioning memory and pre-given understandings

of the past, the classic heritage site will provide them ready-made. Instead of defamiliarizing the supposedly familiar, it is meant as an aid to further familiarization.

(2000: 55-6)

While acknowledging the criticisms that are often levelled against such places, archaeologist Michael Shanks offers another way of approaching the British heritage site:

the experience of heritage is about encounter and images. Not the objects and sites themselves so much as what they say of *us*, of national or local identity, what they symbolize and evoke. These are not primarily cognitive experiences where facts and knowledge about the past are acquired from the official learned guide book. They are affective. And like the disorder of memory, heritage is piecemeal. In Britain heritage places considerable emphasis on this relationship with memory, relating sites and objects with images, sounds, impressions of a sort of cultural collective memory. ... The power of heritage is that it is about signification – things meaning *for* what we are now.

(Shanks 1992: 107-8)

The notion of a collective memory, its production and the effect of our interaction with it, is central to Shanks's discussion. He writes of the symbolic exchange between past and present, with the heritage site positioned as a means of exploring the visitor's present as well as a version of the past. This might be problematic, but it might also be productive. In *Sensuous Geographies*, Paul Rodaway analyses such environments as the Jorvik Centre: "though ostensibly grounded in a 'real' past, much imagination is used in these re-creations. It is heritage rather than history" (1994: 168). But how would we recognize it if it were 'history', or a 'real' past?⁹ Rodaway seems to use these terms as if they were one recognisable thing and their value clearly established. Shanks's approach, on the other hand, allows us to understand heritage in terms of what it is, rather than what it is not. That is, instead of denigrating heritage because it is not 'history', we might find value in the way heritage works in the present, in its positioning of its visitor/spectator, and in the fact that it combines the techniques of museology and of theatre to create a performance of space.

As conventional museum, research centre and heritage site, the Jorvik Centre weaves together different threads of present(s) and past(s) and thus, though it asserts a sense of authenticity, draws attention to the active decisions that have been made in

representing a set of spatial memories.¹⁰ Together with the critical approaches offered by Crownshaw and Shanks, the Jorvik experience might provide a model through which to reflect upon the production of *York Millennium Mystery Plays*, which also uses memory to perform meanings in the present. The production's version of a past is necessarily complicated by the two pasts implicit in the performance texts: the past of the biblical events depicted, and that of the medieval York for which the plays were written. The line of continuity it apparently celebrates is further disrupted by the different voices contributing to the production, representing different approaches to the Minster as performance site, to the plays themselves and, significantly, to the question of how to represent these at the end of a millennium. If the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* construct a collective memory, it is one into which other voices, other pasts and the specific present (and presence) of the spectator might intervene. A consideration of the production in these terms expands the model of negotiation begun in Chapter Three into questions of temporality, investigating the performative exchange between a range of pasts and presents in a culturally charged space.

Archaeologies of Memory: Mike Pearson's *Bubbling Tom*

"A free guided walk around the streets and lanes of Hibaldstow, North Lincolnshire on the 24 and 25 April 2000 at 7pm (meet outside the chip shop).

In the landscape of the village in which he was born and brought up the artist enlists the help of relatives, neighbours and others to construct an archaeology of his life up to the age of six. Surveying marks left, memories and photographs of him in this place the project will lead to public performances in the form of a guided tour"

(Small Acts at the Millennium website)

In one sense, *Bubbling Tom* is out of place here: intended as a small-scale, private act between family and friends, Pearson's intimate guided walk seems to resist invocation as part of an academic discourse of commemoration, representation and the performance of heritage at the brink of a new millennium. Yet it is precisely for this reason that it should be discussed, mounting as it does a challenge to notions of national collectivity and coherence and thereby providing a useful model for investigating alternative modes of remembering through performance.

By way of a response to the low-key, almost homely mood of the performance, I start with a memory, with my memory...

On 25 April 2000 I drove from Guildford, a town in south-east England, to Hibaldstow, North Lincolnshire for the guided walk/performance that marked the culmination of Mike Pearson's *Bubbling Tom* project. The journey took the best part of four hours, but I'd left plenty of time, not wanting to arrive late. I parked in the village, near the chip shop, and took my own preliminary tour of the nearby lanes, fields and pub before returning to sit and wait in my car. I watched as Mike Pearson arrived (I recognized him from a photograph on the Internet) and a small group began to gather outside the chip shop. After a while I took my coat (it was a cold evening) and joined them. I learned that there had been about thirty people attending on the previous night (Easter Monday), but there were many fewer on the night I was there. Other than Pearson's wife, Heike Roms, and George who was filming the walk, I was the only person who wasn't a villager and didn't remember the events that were described. Yet although I have never lived north of London and am of a different generation to Pearson, some of the stories he told and photographs he showed of his childhood in a 'fifties village in northern England had a ring of familiarity for me. I connected them with stories I have heard and images I have seen of my father's 'fifties childhood in an area of Leicester, in the midlands. The accents of the people living in Hibaldstow reminded me of that of my grandmother, while Pearson's own accent, I felt, was not dissimilar to my father's, and this I explained to myself through a narrative of the boy who does well at school, moves away to university and does not return, building a career for himself away from his childhood home and carrying the mark of more than one place through his accent. Would Pearson, or indeed my father, recognize this story? I am certain, at least, that they would tell me a Lincolnshire and a Leicestershire accent are very different. Does this matter, in terms of my own experience? At the end of the guided walk one of my fellow walkers, taking pity on me because of my long journey home, invited me along with the others back to her house for tea and cakes, where I was able to chat to Mike Pearson. George the cameraman then drove me back to my car near the chip shop, and I returned home in the small hours of the morning.

Is any of this important? Any spectator attending a performance might tell an individual story of arrival and departure, of connections made and images triggered. But there will be an overlap between types of experience, and certain generalizations

can be made about spectator assumptions and sets of cultural markers shared by sections of the audience. This was acknowledged in 1967 by Hans-Robert Jauss when he developed his literary theory of the 'horizon of expectations',¹¹ translated into performance theory as the personal, social and cultural baggage carried by a member of the audience into the theatrical experience and having an effect on that experience. What is significant, then, is not the minute detail of my experience, interesting though it is to me (and perhaps to me alone). The significance lies in our recognition of the variety of audience experience of the same event, and that the capacity for this variety is to some extent always *written in* to the performance itself. Here, where I want to write about memory and the ways in which it is constructed by performance, it is important to trace the interlacing of different memories and the means by which the spectator's own memory is engaged. A discipline shadowing my enquiry here is archaeology, with the archaeological image encapsulating the notion of space as container of memory (memories as information stored in the relations between artefacts and space) and also signalling a different way of approaching performance for both performance-makers and spectators.

Dear Fiona,

I am nervous about using archaeology in itself as a metaphor for memory in site-specific performance. Just as with the detective at a scene of crime there is pressure for a closure of narrative, in archaeology there is a similar pressure except where it is resisted by the likes of Michael Shanks. Therefore it seems to me that archaeology is only a suitable metaphor when qualified by resistance to closure.

Part of my concern about the archaeological process is the parallel being made between the breaking down (ruin) of buildings or natural formations and the accretion of human thoughts and action about a site. There seems to me to be a danger here of giving an apparently materialist quality to ephemeral behaviour, when in fact the archaeological metaphor hides a rather solipsistic, inaccessible model of ideas and images.

I much prefer, and this may simply reflect my own aesthetic taste and associations, to think of memory in site physically, in the sense of "physics" or even "cosmology". Memory's "decay and death" is not like the ruins of a building, but rather like the evolution of a galaxy with the collapsing, colliding, etc. of memories (like stars).

All the best,

Phil

When Simon Persighetti, discussing his work with the site-specific performance company Wrights & Sites, asserts that "the process of making site specific

performance is often archaeological” (2000: 12) we hear echoes of much of Mike Pearson’s own writing about performance (see in particular Pearson 1994; Pearson & Shanks 2001). The archaeological metaphor favoured by Pearson invokes not only artefact (permanence) but also trace (the ephemeral) and the joining of these traces in narratives that have meaning in and for the present. The suggestion is that sites are aggregations of metaphorical and physical layers and that performance engaging with these sites necessarily explores and comments on those layers. By implication, Pearson’s performance might be understood now as itself a layer or artefact of its site.

How, then, does memory function in *Bubbling Tom*? And how, in a site-specific performance absolutely rooted in the literal and metaphorical topography of Hibaldstow, were my own memories of other places invoked?

Whereas in installation art “the mobile site suggests a distinct genealogy” including “Happenings, situationism [and] Richard Long’s walks” (Meyer 2000: 28), the mobility of Pearson’s performance event draws more particularly on a legacy from outside art contexts: guided walks around tourist sites. Frequently as a spectator travelling to site-specific performances I am also a tourist, but here the format served in part to defamiliarize what for some was familiar territory, making tourists even of Hibaldstow’s long-standing inhabitants. Furthermore, the physical act of moving gives a particular experience of place: that of the journey. At the same time a quest and a narrative of return, *Bubbling Tom* achieves some of its effects precisely by the actual journey that it requires of its audience. Right from the start, then, the guided walk format problematizes the familiar role of the theatre audience and introduces possibilities for alternative roles we might take on: participant, tourist, adventurer, and so on. In its form, the guided walk emphasizes the importance of the place itself, its physical shape and its histories, and therefore the experience of the spectator is, in part, shaped by his or her relationship to and knowledge of that place. This is to say that the performance itself, through the form that it chose, drew attention to the differences between those who lived in Hibaldstow, those who had once lived there but had now moved away, those who had a partner for whom this was a childhood home, and those who had never before visited Hibaldstow. Even within these rough groupings there are of course variations that affect the experience: the audience

included, for example, Pearson's primary school teacher, who therefore had a unique relationship to Hibaldstow County School, the second stop along our route.

The memories carried by the audience into their experience of *Bubbling Tom* became a part of the performance, not only in a vague 'horizon of expectations' sense but also in a very real sense that could be discerned by other spectators. That Pearson's mother and primary school teacher were in the audience, and that both of these spectators featured in the stories that he told, begins to hint at the complex patterns of memory invoked in the performance. The specific relationships of audience to material prompted interjections from the group at points in the walk: on one occasion, Pearson tentatively gave the name of a nearby village where one 'character' in his story had come from, and was corrected; on many occasions, there were murmurs and laughs of recognition, sparking conversations on the walks between stopping places. It is significant also that many of the people from the village had also been on the walk on the previous night. At one stage, knowing the places that were to be visited and the stories that were to be told, Pearson's mother asked him: "Have you forgotten about ...?" All of this leads me to suggest that the comments of the audience created a textual layer of the performance, in many ways similar to that described by Tim Etchells in his notes on Forced Entertainment's *Nights in This City*.

Nights in This City (1995) was a guided tour of [Sheffield] with its audience and performers on board a bus – a guided tour which avoided facts in search of a different truth. Slipping through the centre of the city and out of control – off the beaten path, playing always to the differences between on-route and off-route, centre and periphery, legitimate and illegitimate. Playing always to the different histories written in urban space – the official historical, the personal, the mythical and the imaginary. ...

The text we created – pointing out buildings, street corners, car parks, patches of wasteground – was always overlaid with other texts – with the whispered or even shouted texts of other passengers ('That's where I used to work...' 'That's the place where...') and the silent text of actions created by those living and working in the city as the bus moved through it.

(Etchells 1999: 80-81)

Etchells draws attention to the archaeological layering of performance texts in *Nights in This City*. For Pearson, too, the archaeological metaphor holds: memories, personal and collective stories of Hibaldstow in the 1950s, audience reactions to these, and fragments of quoted poetry and prose are read through one another and through their

spatial contexts. In all these cases particular emphasis is put on the exact places where events occurred, or are imagined to have occurred:

In this window is the team-sheet for the Hotspurs, though I can't read it of course...

...

What's missing *here* is great Uncle Fred's caravan.

...

What you can't see are my hand-prints, in white gloss paint, *on that door over there*. Sorry Dad!¹²

And in all cases a new map is created, albeit ephemeral and unwritten, linking memories and stories to a series of places.

But it is a map that, in the words of Michel de Certeau, "cannot be reduced to [its] graphic trail" because

walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it "speaks". All the modalities sing a part in the chorus, changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time, the path taken and the walker. These enunciatory operations are of an unlimited diversity.

(1984: 99)

In this way de Certeau asks us to consider the text created by the movement of people within a place; this is that "silent text of actions created by those living and working in the city" to which Tim Etchells refers. Both Etchells and de Certeau remind us that the events of the everyday cannot help but be a part of performances such as *Bubbling Tom*. We should note, however, that both writers are dealing with urban practices, while Pearson's interest here is in the rural, a space in which, without the active life of the city as disguise, occurrences such as the arrival of police or the gathering of groups of people cannot go unnoticed.

Standing outside Manchester House, station nine on the guided walk, we hear police sirens and a police car pulls up outside a nearby house. We joke that we are the cause of this, as Pearson stands, toy gun in hand, narrating childhood games of cowboys and indians ("plenty of points for style here: ducking and diving; drawing; shooting; sound effects... And hanging off the side of the horse – Tony's wall – Dick West style"). We wonder whether we are in breach of the Public Order Act, whereby

groups of two or more can be arrested for ‘unlawfully proceeding in a given direction’ (cited in Bender 1998: 130). Our interaction with the ‘real’, the ‘everyday’ of the village, creates for us a further level of performance meaning, as it had done on the previous evening when the group had been mistaken for a religious gathering and taunted by ‘lads’ in a passing car. The real-time occurrences involved in this kind of performance cannot be separated from an account of the performance; moreover, there is a certain delight to be felt in such instances: the spectator stands between two worlds and experiences the effect that each has on the other.

What are the texts of site-specific performance? Where do they come from and how are they created? To what extent are they derived from the site itself? And how might they be remembered and documented after the event? As ‘text’ in performance discourse begins to move away from an equation with ‘script’ we enter territory where a performance text might comprise poetry, song lyrics, newspaper reports, telephone directories, inventories or lists. And ‘found spaces’ reveal ‘found texts’: the road sign, the bus timetable, marked entrances and exits, advertising hoardings, a gravestone inscription – any of these might provide the creative material of site-specific performance.

Bubbling Tom is alert to such spectatorial positioning, weaving together the immediate, remembered and fictionalized experiences attached to Hibaldstow by Pearson, his sources and the spectators/walkers on each occasion. The mode of presentation itself also carries out a weaving of sorts, shifting fluidly between a number of registers:

1. as tour guide, Pearson issued directions (“OK now, we’ll move on...”), signalled the stopping places, and checked that participants were “all right”;
2. as son and friend, he chatted to his mother and to family friends as we moved between stations;
3. as performer, he worked from a text that he’d put together and learnt, usually signalling a shift out of performance mode by pausing slightly or freezing momentarily in a mime before returning to ‘tour guide’ mode;
4. as researcher, Pearson brought other texts into dialogue with the performance’s personal memories and localized stories, reciting poetry (by, for example, Thomas Hardy) or quoting writers whose words seemed to comment on the relationship between people and places.

Picking out and naming registers in this way has the effect of separating them, making them appear mutually exclusive, but in the event they were often mixed, as when somebody in the 'audience' would comment on or question part of the performance script, or when Pearson would pause mid -story or -poem, informing us that he was waiting until a car had gone past. He thus created in *Bubbling Tom* what he has elsewhere referred to as "deep maps", in which "history, landscape and genealogy are woven into a 'sense of place', a sense of belonging, in an improvised response to environment, constantly cross-referenced and updated" (Pearson 1997: 88, my emphasis).

The image of weaving returns, then, and allows us to recall Walter Benjamin, and Penelope. But Benjamin's Penelope metaphor holds further significance, as it implies an act of unpicking as well as of weaving, a work of drawing together that can never be completed. *Bubbling Tom* achieves this simultaneous weaving and unpicking in a number of ways.

Firstly, by including within his performance text quotations from Hardy as well as from a number of Welsh writers, Pearson draws other places within his mnemonic archaeology of Hibaldstow: other senses of (im)placement, of cultural memory and belonging.

The world of our childhood is small. The Welsh call it 'y filltir sgwar', the square mile. But we know it intimately, in a detail we will never know anywhere again. The landscape of our earliest years...

'When the many things I remember actually happened,' Welsh author D.J. Williams wrote, 'whether early or late in the course of that six years, I haven't much of an idea. But I can locate most of them with a degree of certainty – where such and such a thing happened and where I was standing when I heard what I heard...'

Pearson can never complete his weaving because he leaves within it gaps for the spectators to insert their own experiences, images and memories of a childhood place (as insertion that might occur within another gap – the temporal space of walking between stations – that functions, like the conventional theatre interval, to provoke the private or conversational process of constructing meanings). In invoking other orders of memory, *Bubbling Tom* creates a space in which a number of narratives are

brought into dialogue, with the possibility that they may contest, question or throw new light on each other and the performance site.

Secondly, Pearson's process of collection is significant: gathering, writing, learning and performing stories of his early years in Hibaldstow, his performance thus recalls in some aspects a predominantly oral means of passing on the tools (that is, the memories: stories, legend, folklore) needed to operate within a community and its spaces¹³. As Paul Connerton suggests in *How Societies Remember*:

concerning social memory in particular, we may note that images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. ... [I]mages of the past and recollected knowledge of the past ... are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances"

(1989: 3-4).

But this weaving of memories is also an unpicking of any stable category of memory as historical narrative: the collection process disperses any *ownership* of memory across a range of sources of varying levels of authority.

Thirdly, Pearson's own presence in the Hibaldstow to which he introduces us conjures up another kind of gap: that between the childhood experience and the adult memory of it. His concern with issues of nostalgia is evident; quoting Raymond Williams, he suggests that "nostalgia is universal and persistent; only other men's nostalgias offend". The basis of nostalgia, though, is subtly critiqued (as when Pearson took up a position within the environment to echo that in a childhood photograph at the same site shown in the guide book); rather than being simply characterized as problem or celebrated without question, nostalgia is examined as one means of negotiation

Figure 11: Mike Pearson, *Bubbling Tom* (2000)



between past and present. One image that remains in my memory after the event is that of Pearson wading in the beck (in wellies, which he had quickly changed into – to this point he'd been wearing smart black shoes) dressed in a suit and tie and telling stories of the games played in the beck as a child (Figure 11). The performative effect here derives from the disjunction caused by the image, and the implications of the adult, in clothing that signals an adult working or dressing for a formal occasion, positioned as the child. *Bubbling Tom* is in this way an exploration of nostalgia and of the links (both tentative and binding) between memory and space.

Finally, the 'guide book' accompanying *Bubbling Tom*, divided into sections relating to each of the ten stations on the walk, reinforces the impact of the performative discontinuities. Each station is named, but the conventions used for this naming vary: "Hibaldstow County School"; "East Street"; "Tin Tab"; "Bubbling Tom"; "top corner". For each station or stopping point the booklet contains photographs and sometimes reproduces other items of personal and cultural memorabilia (pages from school exercise books, I-Spy books and ration books; drawings; Brooke Bond tea cards). On the right margin of each double-page in the booklet is a quotation from the stories that Pearson tells at that station. These quotations are always partial and unfinished, and somehow enticing: "...the way you laugh..."; "...but did you hear the one about his false teeth..."; "...yet another goldfish-in-a-bag...". Now, as I write about the walk, the guide book is both memento and aide memoire. As a book of memory/ies, it seems to emphasize the fact that something is missing. The ellipses serve to remind us of the gaps conjured up by the performance: gaps in the act of recalling; gaps between (childhood) sites and the stories we tell ourselves about them (as an adult); gaps between performer's and spectator's experience of space.

It is through the spaces and gaps of the performance that *Bubbling Tom* allows different forms of memory to co-exist, engaging the memories of its spectators and creating a space between performer and spectator in which the meanings of the performance site might be negotiated.

By the end of the event, *Bubbling Tom* itself becomes a symbol within the performance of the same name, standing for competing and conflicting memories, local lore, and the displacement of 'truth' in terms of remembering. The reference to

this local spring in the performance title (heightening its importance when it does ‘appear’ at the end, having not been mentioned during the rest of the performance) draws on the trope of the journey as quest; in this case, the quest is both for Bubbling Tom and for the memory of a childhood place.

They say if you drink from ‘Bubbling Tom’ you’ll always come back. I don’t think I ever did... probably because I was never quite sure where it was.

All that’s left then is to have a big argument as to where it really is...

The performance ends with this invitation and with the audience’s response to it. Led by different spectators in turn (with different memories of where to find it) we search for the small, bubbling inlet of water feeding into the stream and referred to as Bubbling Tom; we think we find it, or at least find the site which bears the marks of where it once was. Pearson’s final words are at once an invitation to try to remember and to recognize that you don’t, or can’t, remember or that your memories differ from those of someone else.

This final moment, therefore, points ultimately to the failure of memory by creating a possibility for dispute about the past. It is in this performative move that Pearson is able to trouble the potentially deeply-conservative implications that might be associated with a guided tour of this sort: ostensibly a nostalgic portrayal of a rural English 1950s childhood. Baz Kershaw, in his recent exploration of the sources of radicalism in performance, offers an analytical framework through which we might understand the effects of *Bubbling Tom*. Discussing ways in which the processes of performance can effect “a negotiation between performers and audience about how explicit the problematization of the present by the past might become”, he suggests that

if the problems are subdued, as in most heritage performance, nostalgia and the commodity reign; but if they become explicit then a fresh relationship is created between present and past because history is being newly created, as multiple histories come into play.

(Kershaw 1999: 183)

Together, the gaps in Pearson’s subtle weaving and the questioning of the efficacy of personal and collective memories serve to deconstruct a meta-narrative of linear

progression between past and present and thus to make explicit the problematic relationship between these two temporal categories.

Joining threads: spatial pasts and presents

Both *Bubbling Tom* and the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* located themselves explicitly within a context in which theatrical issues of representation and performance were being debated even outside of arts arenas. Whether the year 2000 represented the end of one millennium, the beginning of another, or an arbitrary passage of time reliant on certain belief systems, it brought with it a set of negotiations pertinent to our site-specific enquiry: between central and marginalized identities, contested and dominant histories, personal and collective memories, and of the *place* of these in local and national terms.

I have argued that an established discourse intrinsically connects memory and space and that site-specific performance is always concerned to some extent with this relationship. But we might identify other, related patterns in the weaving of this chapter's examples. Firstly, each might contribute to, and complicate, an understanding of rural and urban spatial memories. In 1973, Raymond Williams perceived and explored a model of the "knowable community" in the fiction of the country and of the city, in which notions of experience and community as mediated through these fictions are "essentially transparent" in the former and "essentially opaque" in the latter (1975: 202). This contrast is built upon a difference of scale and the resultant 'knowability' of each community as a whole. But, while recognizing the potential usefulness of such a distinction, Williams goes on to argue that an image of wholeness, even in a small country village, is itself a fiction, and that

what is knowable is not only a function of objects – of what is there to be known. It is also a function of subjects, of observers – of what is desired and what needs to be known. And what we have then to see, as throughout, in the country writing, is not only the reality of the rural community; it is the observer's position in and towards it; a position which is part of the community being known.

(202-3)

At first glance, the two performances discussed in this chapter appear to map directly onto Williams's model: the country village of Hibaldstow versus the city of York. Mike Pearson certainly engages with issues of nostalgia as they are commonly related to the country, linking countryside experience to childhood,¹⁴ while the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* shift the focus from personal memory to collective memory, engaging with – and producing – civic rather than individual identity. But although this might suggest that country and city operate different ways of telling, in both of these cases the boundaries become blurred (as Williams himself would have predicted). York itself is certainly not a metropolis, but rather an almost rural city; Mike Pearson opens out his archaeology of his childhood village to include other places, other ways of telling. The experience of each event serves to complicate easy distinctions between the urban and the rural: *Bubbling Tom*, finally, questions the stability and 'knowability' of the memory of its spaces, while the apparent collectivity of the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* is variously undermined. And the motif of the journey, woven through both examples, operates in a way that is perhaps contrary to country/city expectations: the production at York displaces its legacy of travel by fixing itself in one place; the Hibaldstow performance works through ideas of movement and change.

The journey motif bears closer attention here, suggesting a shared concern with the perspectives of walking and not walking (ideas reflected upon in Chapter Seven) and with the linked ideas of travelling and homecoming. To some extent, then, the dichotomy set up and explored through these performances has not been that between country and city but rather between home and place of excursion, between dweller and tourist, and the spectator has been positioned in both of these roles. In creating their performances both Pearson and Doran are making a return to their place of birth, a homecoming,¹⁵ and the resulting events deal in different ways with the relationship between what might be figured as intrinsic to a space (stories; local knowledges; modes of identification; uses of language) and that elsewhere with which it negotiates (national agendas; theatrical conventions; artists' professional biographies). In doing so, they continue a negotiation between spatial pasts and spatial presents.

People use the past as part of the way in which they create a sense of identity or identities, and they create links through myth and legend with

established places in the landscape. They may also use the past to legitimate the present, or to mask change by stressing continuity.

(Bender 1998: 64)

Barbara Bender reminds us that memory is constructed in the present and alerts us to the uses to which it might be put. So what is remembered, and how it is remembered, is always subject to the concerns of the present, and mediated, in the examples drawn upon here, through a present, live encounter between performance, space and audience. In these terms, the decision to begin staging regular performances of the mystery plays at York after the Festival of Britain can be understood as a reassertion of the local over the global, a celebration of civic identity in the aftermath of countries at war. Similarly, the millennium itself, and the need to be among those places 'doing something special' at this time, triggered the decision to reinvent the format of the mystery plays in this instance. Mike Pearson, too, suggests a trigger for *Bubbling Tom*, as the discussion of what happens when a man turns fifty becomes a frame in the present through which a narrative of past events is constructed.

But why all this?

Last September, I turned fifty. Welsh poet David Gwenallt Jones writes:

'After a man has turned fifty he sees rather clearly

The people and surroundings that have made him what he is.'

And D.J. Williams: 'Like turning on a tap when the water is under high pressure, a flood of reminiscences comes to me, if I give it a chance...'

As an important temporal aspect of site-specificity, memory emerges from these examples as a performative construct, embedded in landscapes and yet fruitfully modified and renegotiated through our present relationship to these landscapes. After all, as Lewis Carroll's White Queen scolds Alice: "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards" (Carroll 1982: 175).

Notes:

¹ *The Rough Guide to Britain* lists York Minster as “one of the country’s most important sights” (1998: 547).

² Curated by Tim Etchells, Lois Keidan and Adrian Heathfield. See Heathfield 2000.

³ Chapter Six develops these ideas into an argument for the ‘hybrid identity’ of the site-specific theatre spectator.

⁴ The Minster is famous for its glass, containing, as recorded in *The Rough Guide to Britain*, “the world’s largest medieval stained-glass window and an estimated half of all the medieval stained glass in England” (1998: 547).

⁵ This code has largely replaced those that preceded it, in which levels of visibility depended on class distinctions or in which the visibility of figures of importance in the audience took precedence over that of the performers.

⁶ This (and a similar intervention in my discussion of *Bubbling Tom*) is taken from a letter sent to me by Phil Smith of Wrights & Sites, in response to a draft of this chapter.

⁷ This is made clear in the leaflets advertising the production, through which a package of intercity train ticket, theatre ticket, meal and hotel booking can be purchased.

⁸ It should be noted, however, that Crownshaw applies these ideas specifically to the context of holocaust museums, where questions of memory and how it should be performed have a far graver significance.

⁹ Pearson and Shanks ask similar questions in discussing “the romantic fallacy of the ‘real’ past” (2001: 113).

¹⁰ In this way, the Jorvik Centre engages with a trajectory of museum discourse that moves from the display of objects to the construction of narratives (see, for example, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill’s *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, 2000).

¹¹ Parts of Jauss’s essay, ‘Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory’, are reproduced in Rice & Waugh 1992

¹² Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations in this section are taken from Mike Pearson’s unpublished performance text. Parts of this are included in Pearson’s documentation of the event in Heathfield 2000.

¹³ But see Ong (1982) for the distinction between the ‘primary orality’ of cultures that have never known writing and the ‘secondary orality’ that exists now that our ways of thinking have been conditioned by writing and by print culture.

¹⁴ For a prominent example of this tradition see Laurie Lee’s childhood memoir *Cider With Rosie* (first published in 1959). In terms of debates about the role of memory in experience, it is significant that Lee notes at the beginning of this first volume of autobiography that “the book is a recollection of early boyhood, and some of the facts may be distorted by time”.

¹⁵ For a sustained analysis of these ideas as played out in dramatic literature rather than live performance, see Una Chaudhuri’s *Staging Place*. Chaudhuri argues that modern drama “is above all else a drama about *place*, and, more specifically, about place as understood through, around, and beyond the figure of *home*” (1995: 27). As the twentieth century advances, experiences of displacement bring to modern drama “a deepening uncertainty about the reality of home, both as place and as idea” (92).

Chapter Five: Beating Time Theatre, Site and Rhythm

*The world in which we live is a fairly structured place.
Even the most casual glance at our environment would
already reveal a certain degree of orderliness. One of
the fundamental parameters of this orderliness is time –
there are numerous temporal patterns around us.
(Eviatar Zerubavel, Hidden Rhythms)*

*The essence of rhythm is the preparation of a new event
by the ending of a previous one. A person who moves
rhythmically need not repeat a single motion exactly. ...
Rhythm is the setting-up of new tensions by the
resolution of former ones.
(Susanne Langer, Feeling and Form)*

“What time is this place?” ask Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks (2001: 178) as they argue for an approach to ‘theatre/archaeology’ that would take into account the *temporality* of its own practice. This chapter asks some similar questions: following a track leading off from the previous chapter’s argument that sited memories always involve a dialogue between the temporal categories of past and present, it pursues an understanding of spatiality in general, and of site-specific performance in particular, that would acknowledge the imperatives of time through which we experience it.

Therefore, I turn here to metaphors of time – notions of ‘rhythm’ and ‘beating time’ lead us, for example, to cycles and dynamics, evolution, time-frame, flow, progress, repetition, pace and discontinuity – and these function as reflexive tools in the epistemological enquiry of the thesis. Firstly, they power a negotiation between a range of phenomenological and performative versions of site by focusing attention onto the many subtle changes of time that affect our analysis of otherwise apparently *fixed* or *measurable* spaces. In this sense, they serve as a reminder of the time-based nature of our experiences of place as well as performance. Secondly, they usefully complicate the kinds of movement suggested in the relationship between the wider metaphors of this thesis: orientation and exploration. Such movement, as Barbara Bender reminds us, “always involves time (right times, wrong times, clock time, seasonal and personal time)” (1998: 22). Here, then, I want to suggest that

‘exploration’ cannot be understood solely as a spatial practice; it makes sense, and is useful as an heuristic device, only if we consider it also as a temporal practice. Site-specific performance, too, is frequently also *time*-specific; this chapter adopts the notion of rhythm as a means by which we might understand this dynamic.

Temporalizing space – situating rhythm

Gaston Bachelard’s poetic analysis of the ways in which we “experience intimate places” contains a tantalizing reference to a mode of enquiry that he has elsewhere (in *La dialecte de la durée*) named ‘rhythmanalysis’. For Bachelard, concerned with a spectrum of patterns “from the great rhythms forced upon us by the universe to the finer rhythms that play upon man’s most exquisite sensibilities” (1994: 65), this kind of analysis seems to hold mainly “psychoanalytic and therapeutic potential” (Kofman & Lebas 1996: 28-9). It is only by means of his extended metaphor of the house as psyche that Bachelard’s rhythmanalysis is applied to notions of space. Henri Lefebvre, however, begins to develop these ideas specifically in relation to the everyday of the city.

In his ‘Elements of Rhythmanalysis’ Lefebvre argues that a notion of rhythm also implies “polyrhythmy” and “arhythmy”; between these are the related categories that emerge through his writing: hard rhythms, diurnal rhythms, slow rhythms, alternating rhythms, lunar rhythms, social rhythms, extra-daily rhythms and “the rhythms of ‘the other’” (1996: 221-235). In applying these related concepts to analyses of a street in Paris and a generic Mediterranean city, he offers an alternative mode of urban critique to Barthes’s semiology. Lefebvre’s is a reaction against a privileging of the symbol as the basis of analysis; instead, though his concept of rhythm might be perceived as an “image”, it is an image that not only can be *listened to* but that “listens to itself” (227). The reflexivity implied here also affects the analyst of such patterns, who “must be at the same time both inside and out” of the rhythmic space (219).

Finally in this trajectory of theorizing rhythm I want to turn to the geographer Mike Crang. Crang’s own exploration, proceeding “through four circuits” (2001: 187) of urban and critical space, makes explicit the potency of ‘rhythm’ as a mode of spatial analysis by making connections between the understandings of ‘time-space’ across a

wide range of theorists (including Lefebvre, Bakhtin, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze). In doing so, Crang develops a notion of time-space as temporalized space, rather than spatialized time, and argues for the importance of a critical understanding of time as event rather than container.

In the context of the present study, what I find particularly useful in Crang's essay is the connection that he makes between Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis and de Certeau's space/place model (2001: 204). Rhythm here becomes a means of accounting for multiple temporalities: those determined by spatial rulers as well as those emerging out of the practices of the 'masses'. It is this attention to plurality, and more importantly to the social heterogeneity implied by such temporal plurality (where uniform time corresponds to the kinds of power structure that de Certeau, following Foucault, has sought to deconstruct), that I suggest marks a useful mode of exploration in the field of site-specificity.

Crang positions his study as an investigation into the relationship between lived time, represented time and urban space. It is the *representation* part of this model that is of particular interest in the examples of performance that I have chosen to discuss in this chapter. Both the potential and the problematics of spatio-temporal representation *as experienced* are addressed in this chapter's route towards a dramaturgy of rhythm.

In order to follow that path it would seem important to 'signpost' the position of performance in relation to these contexts of spatial, and specifically urban, analysis. We might therefore note, through reference to Richard Schechner, that theatrical events can be argued to be organized rhythmically:

When people "go to the theater" they are acknowledging that theater takes place at special times in special places. Surrounding a show are special observances, practices, and rituals that lead into the performance and away from it. Not only getting to the theater district, but entering the building itself involves ceremony: ticket-taking, passing through gates, performing rituals, finding a place from which to watch: all this – and the procedures vary from culture to culture, event to event – frames and defines the performance. Ending the show and going away also involves ceremony: applause or some formal way to conclude the performance and wipe away the reality of the show re-establishing in its place the reality of everyday life. The performers even more than the audience prepare and then, when the show is over, undertake "cooling-off" procedures. ... Too little study

has been made of how people – both spectators and performers – approach and leave performances. How do specific audiences get to, and into, the performance space; how do they go from that space? In what ways are gathering/dispersing related to preparation/cooling off?

(1988: 169)

Schechner's description of the "ticket-taking, passing through gates, performing rituals, finding a place from which to watch" and so on bears comparison with the sequences, fluxes and intervals noted by Lefebvre in his description of the rhythms of a Paris street: "the cars stop, pedestrians cross, soft murmurings ... the bellowing rush of the large and small beasts ... lurch[ing] forward ... finding parking places" (1996: 220-221). In Schechner's analysis, these patterns are tied not only to "special times" but also, fundamentally, to "special places": the theatre building becomes, then, as much a candidate for rhythmanalysis as the urban street.

Such a rhythmanalysis might begin with the practice of the matinee. When the matinee, as an alternative to evening performances, was first introduced to London theatres in the 1860s (Trussler 1994), the pace of theatre-going changed. The theatre building seemed a different place in the light of the afternoon and the city itself was at a different point in its daily cycle. As Schechner has argued, the process of theatre-going involves a set of "special observances, practices and rituals", producing a pattern that "frames and defines the performance". The processes he names – the gathering and dispersing, the preparation and cooling off – take on a different slant when the time allocated for their acting out is the afternoon rather than the evening. I want to suggest, therefore, that the matinee as a phenomenon creates and alters rhythms of performance, and especially of reception, in the multiple and layered creature that I have, for the purposes of making a distinction, referred to as the 'traditional theatre'. The matinee produces an altered atmosphere among the audience, a higher proportion of which have conventionally been women (originally for reasons of social respectability) than for evening performances. For the spectator as well as the performer, though, there comes a point in the darkened auditorium where the time of day is forgotten and the rhythms of the fiction begin to take over. We begin, then, not only with a sense of the rhythms carried by the theatre building as site but also with an acknowledgement of the temporality that is specifically theatrical.

The theatrical event is comfortably created and received within the bounds of the theatre building, but it is less used to confronting the non-theatrical alternatives to Schechner's processes of gathering and dispersing: passing by; running through; meandering; the rush or stop-start of transport; the creation of a series of foci rather than one main focus. From the inside, a rural and an urban theatre may appear much the same (although there will be many fewer of the former in existence); moving beyond the theatre, however, the rhythmic differences between these two spatial categories begin to make themselves felt.

Theatres produce a particular set of rhythmic practices. Schechner has pointed to the rhythmic nature, for the spectator, of 'going to the theatre', but how will this differ in the case of site-specific work? A consideration of theatre-going at a practical level might concern itself with the processes of preparing to go out, travelling to the theatre venue, having a drink beforehand, going to the bar at the interval, chatting afterwards and travelling home. The parallel processes in site-specific performance will vary enormously, depending, for instance, on how the work get its audience to the site: does it issue instructions, or does it transport the spectators from another venue (perhaps a more traditional theatre venue)? Does it rather create an audience out of the people that it finds in the site? In this case the audience, having not prepared specifically for the performance, will have a different experience of its rhythms. We might enquire, also, into the extent to which the temporal frame of 'theatre-going' remains when we move beyond the theatre building and the extent to which it is replaced by new time-based patterns; such an enquiry retreads the paths of some of the similar questions asked of spatial rules in Chapter Three. The current chapter, then, considers the rhythms that are inherited when the performance site is not a designated theatre building and asks what it might mean for site-specific performance to locate itself within those rhythms. This involves a focus on the possibilities that might exist for a performance to interact with, disrupt or otherwise alter the rhythms of its site. In what sense might a site-specific performance be said to 'beat time'?

I propose to conduct much of the remainder of this exploration by following the routes of three different 'categories' of rhythm: natural, industrial and everyday. These categories are deliberately, but suggestively, unstable, and I choose them here as a temporal, and temporary, tactic that allows me to raise and explore a number of

issues of spatial and theatrical operations of time. Together, they work as points of navigation, beginning in direct response to the types of space that site-specificity has seemed to favour (see Chapter Two). For each, I use the example of one site, together with a performance that occurred within that site, in order to address the questions of this chapter. The journey we embark on, then, leads us through a range of ostensibly very different spaces: beginning with weather patterns, we move to the Dreaming-tracks of Australia and then to a town in Surrey, spending some time in a factory before joining the guides Peter Ackroyd and Janet Cardiff as they lead us through London's East End. In the space of this chapter, these sites are linked in their different contributions to my proposal that we might make some productive steps towards a nuanced analysis of site-specificity from the initial suggestion that our time-based experience of both spaces and performances can be understood in terms of rhythms.

Finally, an analysis of the Bristol Old Vic's 2001 production of *Up the Feeder, Down the 'Mouth and Back Again'*¹ will work from the three points of navigation proposed – natural, industrial and everyday rhythms – to explore one means by which the notion of rhythms allows us to complicate the more obvious reading of a mainstream performance that is, in many ways, out of place.

"Next Thursday, then?"

"Yes, next Thursday."

Although the 1945 encounter played out between Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard is famously described as brief, cinematic codes stretch and pull it to fill the space of a ninety-minute film. Indeed for us, as viewers, the brief encounter lasts longer than any other aspect of the characters' lives. Its duration, in quantitative terms, is mapped out by train timetables and the schedules of work and family. But qualitatively, something else is happening here: these are the eponymous still lives of the Noel Coward play upon which he based his screenplay. And it seems that this temporary stillness can only take place in-between places, the train station café signifying a 'neither here nor there' space, a place that manages simultaneously to suggest movement and stillness, arrival and departure.

"There's still time, if we control ourselves and behave like sensible human beings. There's still time."

Natural rhythms

We think of weather as transient, changeable, and above all, ephemeral; but everywhere nature remembers. Trees, for example, carry the memory of rainfall. In their rings we read ancient weather – storms, sunlight, and temperatures, the growing seasons of centuries. A forest shares a history, which each tree remembers even after it has been felled.

(Michaels 1996: 211)

Through the character of Ben, Anne Michaels suggests in her Orange Prize-winning *Fugitive Pieces* that “everywhere nature remembers”. An academic studying ‘weather and biography’, Ben proposes that places are marked by the natural rhythms of rainfall, storms, sunlight and changing temperatures and that these marks can be read and interpreted long after the event. I have begun with this example, not only because the novel as a whole is a fascinating exploration of human relationships with places – of what it means to be ‘at home’ and ‘out of place’ – but also because, in this particular passage, Michaels reminds us that the patterns created by weather impact upon the physical environment in tangible and readable ways.

In Britain the varied and often poor weather is not merely a cultural joke, it is an inconstant reality for any practitioners seeking to create performance outdoors. When Charles Kingsley wrote, in his 1858 ‘Ode to the North-East Wind’, that “’Tis the hard grey weather/Breeds hard English men”, he pointed to an idea that can be found also in much British drama and performance. From Shakespeare’s suggestion, in *As You Like It*, that the English countryside holds “No enemy/But winter and rough weather” to IOU Theatre’s 1980 performance *Odd Descending*, “specially commissioned for an English park and English weather”, the natural patterns of rainfall, wind, darkness and (Dickensian) fog have informed the creation of dramatic patterns in Britain. The relationship between weather, space and performance manifests itself in a number of ways: it has a practical aspect, affecting pragmatic decisions about what type of performance is produced where and when; it speaks to issues of spatial memory (see Chapter Four), whereby a place is seen to bear the *memory* of climate changes and past atmospheric conditions; finally, it combines with other spatial factors to contribute an immediate shape and structure to any outdoor performance.

But 'natural' rhythms are not all about weather. As Augusto Boal reminds us, seasons, light and time, too, are intrinsically tied not only to space but also to human interactions with space.

We have biological rhythms in our body: the rhythm of breathing – above all we have a rhythmical heart, melodious blood pumping. We have the circadian rhythms of hunger, of sleep, of sex.... The cosmic rhythms of day and night, winter and summer.... When you live beside the sea, you have the sea as an essential rhythm: you internalise it. It is necessary to harmonise all our rhythms.

(Boal 2001: 107)

Moreover, by drawing links between organic, bodily rhythms (breathing; the pulse) and the rhythms of the places we inhabit (represented, for instance, in the sea), Boal makes the suggestion that geographical patterns are fundamental to the human activity within them. This is a useful suggestion for performance, but one that also forces us to consider the terminology we are using when we start to analyse performance in terms of 'natural' rhythms. A glance back through the present paragraph reveals a set of problematic concepts: natural; intrinsic; organic; fundamental. Though I want to be able to discuss those processes that are of the natural world – weather, seasons, light, time, biological cycles – it is important to bear in mind that these, and particularly a prescribed set of responses to them, are not 'natural' (in the sense of normal or innate) to all people and in all situations. The final source that I will draw on in this discussion, then, moves us from weather and climate to a consideration of a more complex set of human interactions with landscape. Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* is particularly pertinent here because it explores more deeply than most accounts the ways in which the rhythms of the natural environment might operate, while establishing a political and social context within which the significance of these rhythms is questioned.

The Songlines was published just two years before Chatwin's early death in 1989. That the travel writer himself considered it a work of fiction suggests something about the evocative quality of this account of a contemporary Australian Aboriginal way of life and its relationship to a system of ancient 'Songlines' or 'Dreaming-tracks'. As Barbara Bender has observed, Chatwin's book describes "another way, not just of seeing, but of *being in* the landscape, one in which the divide that we create between

nature and culture becomes meaningless" (1998: 3). The notion of the Songlines is linked to the Aboriginal creation myth, in which the landscape was sung into being by the Ancestors. Today, the resulting songs are a guide to a means of journeying through these sites, going on 'Walkabout'. This appeals to Chatwin's overall thesis, developed across his 12 years of writing and publishing, that humans are innately nomadic, that restlessness and the will to travel can be discerned from infancy and that these impulses express themselves, though in different ways, across all cultures.

Roughly a third of the way through the book, Chatwin is able, through the concept of the Songlines, to make clear connections between the natural landscape, human activity, and a musical notion of rhythm.

Regardless of the words, it seems the melodic contour of the song describes the nature of the land over which the song passes. So, if the Lizard Man were dragging his heels across the salt-pans of Lake Eyre, you could expect a succession of long flats, like Chopin's 'Funeral March'. If he were skipping up and down the MacDonnell escarpments, you'd have a series of arpeggios and glissandos, like Liszt's 'Hungarian Rhapsodies'.

Certain phrases, certain combinations of musical notes, are thought to describe the action of the Ancestor's *feet*. One phrase would say, 'Salt-pan'; another 'Creek-bed', 'Spinifex', 'Sand-hill', 'Mulga-scrub', 'Rock-face' and so forth. An expert song-man, by listening to their order of succession, would count how many times his hero crossed a river, or scaled a ridge – and be able to calculate where, and how far along, a Songline he was.

'He'd be able', said Arkady 'to hear a few bars and say, "This is Middle Bore" or "That is Oodnadatta" – where the Ancestor did X or Y or Z.'

'So a musical phrase', I said, 'is a map reference?'

'Music', said Arkady, 'is a memory bank for finding one's way about the world.'

(Chatwin 1988: 108)

The Aboriginal culture described in *The Songlines*, then, *performs* its landscape in a very literal way, constructing a spatial sense of being that, for Barbara Bender, is "utterly different" from our own (seen from a western European perspective). Yet by the end of the book, Chatwin has come to believe that "the Songlines were not necessarily an Australian phenomenon, but universal: that they were the means by which man marked out his territory, and so organized his social life. All other successive systems were variants – or perversions – of this original model" (282). Like Boal's statement, above, this is a seductive idea for the field of site-specific

performance. Chatwin's account, though, belies any simple romanticization of such a model: running through the book is the railway, or rather, a struggle between the authorities planning a new system of rail tracks and the inhabitants for whom the proposed site of the railway is sacred. This undermines, at least to a certain extent, the perceived 'naturalness' of those natural rhythms we have been discussing and comes to symbolize contested space and different cultural relationships with the physical environment.

Site: *The Electric Theatre, the river Wey and St Catherine's Chapel, Guildford, Surrey*

I want to begin to ground some of these observations in a specific example and so here I discuss some of the rhythmic implications of the town of Guildford, Surrey. Though the performance that will act as a case study for this section (see below) is entitled *The St Catherine's Chapel Performance*, its site is actually much wider than the chapel alone. Just as the American choreographer and composer Meredith Monk's large-scale site-specific performances would often move between a number of sites (Kaye 2000: 119-123) to create effects of layering and juxtaposition, so here we encounter two very different spaces within Guildford – and another, moving space that links the two.

Firstly, it is worth saying a few words about the extended site that contains all three of these spaces, and that is Guildford itself. First recorded in the ninth century, Guildford has since 1257 been the county town of Surrey, a prosperous area in the south-east of England. It wears its history like a heritage site, proudly displaying preserved cobbled streets and the remains of its Norman castle. The top of the castle keep is one of the few places in Guildford from where the hilltop chapel of St Catherine can still be seen. Another town site that provides such wide-reaching views is Guildford Cathedral, which in 1961 became the last in the country to be consecrated. This cathedral, used as a location in the film *The Omen*, hovers above the town from its position at the top of Stag Hill. Much of the surrounding area is farmland, interspersed with attractive country villages.

The Electric Theatre is located in the heart of the spatial context outlined above: a modern theatre standing in the middle of a busy road intersection. It is a non-

producing venue, which means that it serves as a *station point* on a route of other performance sites: a place to visit and then move on from.

The chapel of St Catherine, too, was conceived as a transitional site: a halfway point for pilgrims en route between Portsmouth and London. Built in the early fourteenth century, it was used as a site of pilgrimage until around 1450, when it fell into disuse. The chapel belongs to St Nicholas's church, a town-centre community that now uses the place only once a year for a commemorative service to mark its consecration. The artists Kate Lawrence and Janine Creaye, on a website detailing their process in developing the work at St Catherine's,² ask: "Is a major part of its mystery and focus for stories because it did not retain a positive use, so was left open for people to project ideas on to...?"

Between these two spaces – the modern theatre and the ruined chapel – is the river Wey, moving through the site like a pulse. Built in the mid-seventeenth century, the Wey navigation originally enabled the transportation of goods along its 15 and a half mile length. Today, however, it has two roles: as picturesque focus seen from bridges, bankside paths or town centre pubs, and as boating site – a space for leisure and sport. In each of these manifestations the river carries a rhythmic force, a steady flow that soothes or guides but that always holds a potential danger: here other, biological, rhythms might be stopped forever. The river's symbolism is potent, in the manner identified by Iain Sinclair in his narrative of the Thames 'in twelve tales', *Downriver*. In one of these tales ('The Guilty River'), Sinclair writes that

the river *is* time: breathless, cyclic, unstoppable. It offers immersion, blindness: a poultice of dark clay to seal our eyes for ever from the fear and agony of life. Events, and the voices of events, slurp and slap, whisper their liquid lies: false histories in mud and sediment; passions reduced to silt.

(Sinclair 1995: 304)

Similarly, the Wey seems to index time in Guildford, connoting both historical memory and the reminder of death, while offering a site for the projection of other narratives, other ways of telling. It provides, therefore, an appropriate link between two spaces of different forms of storytelling: the theatre and the chapel.

So the web of natural rhythms contained within this extended site is rich and complex. It encompasses different types and textures of terrain, each inviting its own rhythm of movement: the manmade surface; the riverside path; the hill. Its architecture points to different modalities of time: the here-and-now of the modern theatre is juxtaposed with the chapel, which stands as a symbol of a much longer historical rhythm of gradual ruin and decay. Rather like Anne Michaels's trees, the chapel carries "the memory of rainfall" and other atmospheric effects, almost becoming in its disuse a part of the natural environment surrounding it. And all the time the river creates a pulse running through and past these spaces, ostensibly constant and eternal but in fact bearing witness to the dynamic life of the natural world – most clearly seen in the way that rainfall has the capacity to effect a series of changes to its shape, volume and pace.

Performance: The St Catherine's Chapel Performance (Kate Lawrence and Janine Creaye, 2001)

The spectators gather and wait in the foyer area of the Electric Theatre. We are divided into three groups, in which we are then led in turn along the river Wey by storyteller-guides whose performance operates within a framework of familiar tourist tropes. The refrain of these guides – 'Trust me, I'm telling you stories' – repeated after each quasi-historical or -mythological tale recounted en route, undermines the apparent authority of their position and questions the status of 'legitimate' spatial and touristic narratives. At various points along the walk can be seen solo dancers, seemingly *out of place* in the natural environment and not referred to by the guides. The riverside walk ends as we cross a bridge and pass a moored boat containing the Ophelia-like model of the 'Maid of Astolat' (a figure in a local myth), tended by a performer singing a mournful folk song. Having been invited to anoint ourselves with the water of a local spring, we are taken away from the riverbank and up to a railway bridge, where the three groups of spectators meet as dusk falls. From here, the audience is led up the hill to stand on the grass just below St Catherine's chapel. Looking up at the ruined chapel the two window frames seem huge, and it is in these narrow spaces that the dancer Kate Lawrence performs. Projections of drawings, video of the site, of St Nicholas's church and of the dancer herself are played onto a screen stretched across one of the window frames, which is variously lit in order to create a series of effects: switching between transparency and opacity, revealing

Lawrence in silhouette behind the screen or enabling her to appear in the other window and dance a duet with her projected image. When the performance ends, the spectators are invited to make their own way back to the theatre, though a quicker roadside route is pointed out.

Let us return to Schechner for a moment to consider what happens to the practice of ‘going to the theatre’ – to the ritualized processes of gathering and dispersing – in the frame created through this performance. It is clear that these processes are overtly staged in the St Catherine’s event, in which the spectators are invited to enact their role as audience in a particularly knowing manner. The performance follows that “constellation of rhythmically organized events” (Schechner 1988: 158) that Schechner has identified as a procession: involving a fixed route, at several points along which “the procession stops and performances are played” (159), and movement towards a known goal. The initial arrival at the theatre is echoed in the later arrival of the separate groups of spectators at the foot of the hill, where the process of gathering is acted out for a second time (suggesting that the earlier gathering and temporary dispersal might have been a rehearsal for this instance). In this manner, the small-scale performances that occur at various points along the river bank within the touristic framework of the guided walk or local history tour are a means of priming the audience: teaching it a set of themes and knowledges about the site and thus producing an interpretative model through which the ‘main’ performance

Figure 12: Kate Lawrence and St Catherine’s chapel



at the chapel might be read. The event draws deliberately on the tropes of pilgrimage, reinforcing the ritualized nature of Schechner's model and emphasizing the location of St Catherine's chapel as both literal (given its position as goal at the top of the hill) and metaphorical acme of the performance. The hill provides its own rhythms to intensify this effect. From a practical perspective, it physically alters the speed and tempo of the walker's movement. As symbol, too, it carries weight here, if we consider the impulse behind (and religious significance of) building churches on top of hills. The chapel, then, supersedes the theatre as privileged 'special place' of this performance.

It is therefore significant that the performance makes a point of deliberately referencing the theatre building, always moving in the space between the rhythms of the theatre as institution and those of the non-theatre site. Lawrence and Creaye make use of the Electric Theatre as actual and metaphorical starting point for their site-specific performance, staging a literal move away from the theatre building. The theatre, then, lurks always in the background of this event, as a reminder of a more familiar set of performance rhythms. So what rhythms are replacing those of the theatre in *The St Catherine's Chapel Performance*?

This question might be addressed in part by drawing again on Bruce Chatwin's notion of a rhythmic connection to landscape as described in *The Songlines*. The idea that every hill, river, bend and rise is represented in the rhythm of the Ancestors' song, from which these landscape features can be recalled, carries a resonance in this Surrey site. Using this notion here, we might suggest that the spectators of Lawrence and Creaye's performance mark out the beat of this site in three verses and a shared chorus.

This metaphor is a useful one because it allows us to acknowledge that the St Catherine's performance is structured around a set of natural rhythms. In particular, rhythms of light and dark organize the experience and signify the changing focus as the performance progresses. Arriving at the Electric Theatre in daylight, the spectators are able to see each other clearly through the first sections of the event, thus drawing attention to their position as spectators and implicating them in the act of performing. Indeed, in the tour group I joined it emerged that one of the spectators, a

child, knew a relevant piece of local folklore, and so she was called upon by the guide to recount her story at one of the stopping points. Here, the distinction between the roles of spectator and performer is muddled, and the performance format is structured in such a way as to invite this kind of unselfconscious participation. As we reach the hill, however, there is a shift into a more formal performative mode, and this is marked in the setting of the sun. The whole event is intricately timed in order that the three walks along the river take place in daylight but that the spectators convene at the foot of the hill just at sunset – offering a natural blackout for the grassy ‘auditorium’ surrounding the chapel.

The varied performance elements of the event, then, contribute to its changing rhythms. These move from the informal tourist tropes of the guided walk to the formal rhythmic structures of dance, which themselves engage in different ways with the environment through the performance. The movement style employed by Kate Lawrence when dancing at the chapel is exploratory, acting out a direct response to the architecture of the site. She spins and turns – rather like Alice falling down the rabbit hole³ – when framed by a projection of a tunnel-like section of the chapel’s interior; she climbs and reaches through the bars of a steel barrier; she balances in the window frame. In contrast, the movement of the dancers encountered en route between the theatre and the chapel is *of the site* in a very different way: these are ghost-like figures, swaying as gracefully as the flow of the river – they appear not to acknowledge their own presence in this space, and yet their rhythm is in harmony with some of its elements. The strategy here is one of inserting something into the site that goes against the grain (a familiar strategy in site-specific work), providing a new and unexpected layer of rhythm within the space. These moments produce surprise because they are outside of the performance frame – which itself signals a space where new or different rhythms may be expected.

A performance such as this must be ready to respond to the changing rhythms of its site (the rain, for instance, changed the landscape of the performance: at one point along the walk, a temporary ‘lake’ was created in a field, separating the spectators from one of the dancers seen along the route), but equally important to the aesthetic experience is its ability to use performative rhythms to comment upon, alter or explore the spatial patterns it finds. A simple example is that the tied-up boat bearing

the Maid of Astolat disrupts the natural rhythm of the river; more complex is the effect achieved through the projections onto the space of the chapel window: this simple technique has the capacity to turn the chapel inside-out and to overlay it with images of other spaces (particularly St Nicholas's church). The shifts between projections mark out a beat, and it is to this rhythm that Lawrence dances.

I have been arguing that the theatrical structure of *The St Catherine's Chapel Performance* and its position *vis a vis* the traditional theatre can best be understood by constructing a theoretical framework of rhythms. I want to end this discussion by returning to the need to subvert the perceived *naturalness* of natural rhythms, undermining the romantic image of a site-specific practice that is able to move beyond the strict institutional structures of the theatre building and locate itself instead within a natural environment that, it might be implied, is somehow free and uncontrolled. Here I want to recall some of my earlier assertions regarding spatial rules, to remind us that principles of ownership and access contribute to the repertoire of available activity within a site. In order to mount their performance, which had been commissioned as part of the Year of the Artist scheme, Lawrence and Creaye had to seek permission from a number of site controllers. Permission to make use of the Electric Theatre was the easiest to obtain; beyond the theatre were four separate authorities to consult and persuade: the rector of St Nicholas's church, for use of the chapel; Guildford Borough Council, for the hill on which the chapel stands and for the use of the towpath on the left bank of the river; the National Trust, for the use of a small section of the right bank; finally, Wey Navigations was consulted, in order to be allowed to float the Maid of Astolat on the river – that the boat be moored rather than floating freely was a condition of the permission granted.

The picturesque English landscape, it can be seen, is minutely divided up into properties and is subject to issues of ownership and control, of what can and cannot be done in a space. Let us end our exploration of natural rhythms, then, by recalling the connection that John Berger makes between landscape painting and property in his analysis of Gainsborough's 'Mr and Mrs Andrews' ("There were very strict property limits to what was considered *natural*" (Berger 1972: 108)), alongside Barbara Bender's reminder that the landscape is always differentially owned, appropriated and

controlled, “explicable within the historical particularity of British social and economic relations, and a larger global economy” (1998: 131).

Industrial rhythms

So what happens to our understanding of spatial rhythms when we turn to particular spaces that deliberately locate themselves within local and global economies? I am thinking here of the temporal patterns of the workplace, and specifically the industrial workplace.

In his meditation on the interconnectedness of the built environment and the human imagination – *Eccentric Spaces* – Robert Harbison includes a chapter entitled ‘Nightmares of Iron and Glass: Machines’, in which he presents industrial spaces as dehumanizing and emotionless.

If it sought visual effect at all, the Victorian explosion of railroad and factory building sought a depersonalized one in forms bare and unsuggestive. And therefore the reaction against industrialism was not primarily visual but emotional, for what people mainly resented about industrial science was its disentanglement from the maker, its refusal to speak of human weakness. ... [P]eople who worry about the esthetics of industrialism are hoping to find there evidence of individuality or of desire and suffering. Bolder minds have been inspired by the brutishness and facelessness of the industrial revolution, and what the engineers achieve for modern architecture, Lawrence and Joyce achieve for the imagination – a dehumanization that brings with it accesses [sic] of power and energy.
(2000: 38)

But Baz Kershaw manages to find a means of inserting human desires into the industrial site. As a prologue to his investigation into the possibilities for radicalism in performance, he recalls his apprenticeship in a Manchester engineering works, invoking the musicality of the factory:

I'll never forget the morning switch-on in the machine shop: the long rows of lathes, grinders, planers and drills gradually start up and the noise builds into a deafening commotion of squealing, banging, thudding, shuddering and groaning that goes on for the whole day long. The factory air grows thick with vibration and I remember my boy's body being thrilled to be part of its amazing power. ...
And soon I'd got into the whole swing of it so much that it was like dancing and I was exhilarated at having met that machine and learning so

quickly how to make it work so smoothly. It was a brilliant feeling of dancing satisfaction at being a real apprentice as I worked through the last few pins in the cardboard box. ...

I was on that job for the next three months, cursing the factory nearly every day, even when I sometimes danced to its strengthening tunes.

(1999: 1-3)

Here, the rhythmic possibilities created by a virtual orchestra of machines are made apparent: “lathes, grinders, planers and drills” combine to create an atmosphere thick with sound to the extent that the workers’ interactions with these machines might be described as “dancing”. Kershaw captures the paradoxes of factory life: the simultaneous exhilaration and frustration felt at being part of the cycle of the place, the sense of (sometimes enjoyably) being trapped in the inevitability of its rhythms.

So where specifically can we locate industrial rhythms? It is clear that they are tied to particular types of workplace, often – but not always – located in specially designated areas on the outskirts of urban centres. The factory, the working dock, the mill: these places for the most part are used only by those who work within them and contribute to their processes. They are the backstage spaces of the economy rather than the frontstage sites of display and exchange.

It is important to note that my use of *industry* here preserves the contrast that Raymond Williams has noted between “industry as factory production and other kinds of organized work”, even though “perhaps under American influence... [i]t is common now to hear of the holiday industry, the leisure industry, the entertainment industry and, in a reversal of what was once a distinction, the agricultural industry” (1983: 167). Understood in Williams’s terms as “organized mechanical production” occurring in “an institution or set of institutions for production or trade” (165-7), industry creates the cyclical rhythms of repetition and tedium that are the underside of commerce. Unlike many other workplaces, the sites of industry do not have ‘opening hours’, and their daily routine often in fact includes a night shift. They operate a closely-structured time-frame, which might be compared to Schechner’s model of the pattern peculiar to performance: instead of gathering-performing-dispersing, the model of an industrial pattern might be represented as clocking in-producing-clocking off.

The pattern of such sites finds a strong visual representation in the process of making products that look the same as each other over and over again; that is, the rhythmic pattern of repetition corresponds to a visual pattern (or blueprint) for the items produced. Thus the model of industrial production stands in direct contrast to that of theatrical production, where the pattern of repetition is never *exact* repetition: whether in rehearsal or when the shift into performance conditions has occurred, the repetition in theatre-making allows for the possibility of evolution and changing dynamics.

Site: BMW group plant, Oxford

The specific site that I want to locate within a framework of industrial rhythms here is the Oxford plant of the BMW group – a car-manufacturing factory. The rhythms generated here are influenced by the plant's status within the company: this is the sole site of the manufacture of the new Mini (launched in 2001). Sold by Rover in 2000, the plant's new, privileged position within BMW has made it the focus of a large financial investment programme, involving the creation of new jobs and the development of 'operator-friendly' working conditions. Working patterns themselves have been directly influenced by this shift; according to Automotive Intelligence,

the plant employs 2,500 associates who are breaking new ground in the UK automotive industry with a far-reaching flexible working agreement. Shift patterns allow for seven days a week working, if required. For a second shift 1800 additional temporary workers are being hired.

(www.autointell.com)

It is, then, precisely in terms of its working rhythms that the site is singled out as innovative. Other rhythmic implications can be drawn from the physical position of the factory. While the BMW group plant is located within the realm of Oxford, its position is in fact in Cowley on the outskirts of the city and it therefore exists outside of the web of multiple and contradictory temporal patterns that we might identify within a city centre environment. One consequence of this positioning is that the processes of getting to and moving away from the site (comparable with Schechner's gathering and dispersing) generally require some form of transport other than pedestrian modes; a related implication is that this is a place to make a special journey to rather than a place to pass by.

The factory itself combines areas of production and display – of backstage and frontstage – and the shiny reception area in which the Mini is proudly displayed quite easily becomes the theatre foyer. It is here that Creation Theatre Company begin their intervention into the site.

Performance: Hamlet (Creation Theatre Company, February/March 2001)

The production begins by introducing the wedding party of Gertrude and Claudius into the reception/foyer area inhabited by the spectators. In this construction the spectators become wedding guests, and are greeted by the couple before being led into the factory/auditorium space and seated according to their tickets: *bride* or *groom*.

The process of walking, as spectator, from the foyer area across the predominantly empty factory floor to the stage and seating area set up in the middle of the large space emphasizes the disjunction between factory and theatre as modes of spatial practice and behaviour. The small, lit auditorium dwarfed in this huge industrial site seems to recall nothing so much as the set for Stephen Daldry's celebrated production of *An Inspector Calls*⁴, in which the Birlings' house was constructed as a doll's house, rendered small and artificial within the exterior 'reality' of a dirty, cobbled London street. Attention is drawn to the theatrical apparatus as being somehow at odds with the 'real' world of workers and working patterns, a juxtaposition that seems to rehearse the illusion/truth dichotomy that will emerge through the play.

In this way, the industrial space is deployed not for its own historical, cultural or social specificity, but rather becomes a means of generating a set of metaphorical and symbolic associations that might be of use in exploring Shakespeare's text. I will argue here that Creation Theatre's *Hamlet* provides an example of a performance that appropriates and mimics the rhythms associated with its site in order to achieve aesthetic effects.

The publicity for the event promises that "the unusual setting presents a unique theatre-going experience and helps the company create a stunning, industrial production", focusing on the fact that "the unconventional production is staged in the panel store and former pattern shop where the original Mini was developed". For one reviewer, certainly,

the result is spellbinding. Creation's Elsinore Castle is a nightmarish oasis of light and hard metal in one corner of the vast factory space; a place where the actors can storm over girders, climb up poles and grapple in cages; where they can screech into view in purring new cars, or loom menacingly in the middle distance; where Shakespeare's famous lines can be focussed before echoing away under the girders into the blackness.

(Matthew Rogers, *Daily Information*, 5 February 2001)

Certainly, the production's setting has the effect of slightly unsettling the spectatorial experience – making it seem *extraordinary* in a way that a theatre building would not have been able to do. Just as the rhythms of the theatre building are altered by the phenomenon of the matinee, so the rhythms of the workplace change when they are experienced out of normal working hours. Spectators of Creation Theatre's *Hamlet* share with those of other productions that utilize working spaces at dormant times⁵ (examples are Forkbeard Fantasy's *The Brain* at London's Natural History Museum and Sue Palmer's *Hair Raising* in a Somerset hair salon) the strange experience of being there out-of-hours. But in this case, the factory site has no precedent of admitting the public even during 'normal' working hours: the experience, then, is of entering the site of production yet having no part in the mechanical process.

Beyond offering this spectatorial experience, what are the implications of the relationships forged between the Oxford BMW plant and the performance? What does the site (and its rhythms) bring to the theatrical event? My answers to these

questions suggest that the factory becomes a rich metaphor for some of the themes of the text.

The vastness of the factory floor is itself suggestive, affording the kinds of anonymous, mobile, metallic sounds that contributed to perhaps the most effective ghost scene

Figure 13: Creation Theatre, *Hamlet* (2001)



I have ever witnessed in stagings of *Hamlet*. It is pertinent, also, to read the factory as a gendered space, whose patterns of behaviour and movement include some characters while excluding others (specifically Gertrude and Ophelia). The relationship of performance to site might be summarized in the visually striking scenes in which working cars were driven across the factory floor and into the stage space (Figure 13). Here, the cars are able to function metonymically for both a network of characters (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – Claudius and Gertrude – Hamlet) and a temporal sequence in the history of the factory itself (old Mini – Rover 75 – new BMW Mini).

The relationship between spatial rhythms and performance rhythms developed in this production might be better understood if we compare its strategy with that adopted in one of Brith Gof's large-scale, site-specific works: *Gododdin*. Asserting that "the impetus to create the performance came with the darkest days of 'Thatcherism', a time when Margaret Thatcher herself proclaimed society dead", Mike Pearson writes that

Gododdin was conceived, constructed and initially presented – for three nights late in December 1998 – in the engine-shop of the enormous, disused Rover car factory in Cardiff, itself a potent symbol of economic decline and industrial decay.

(Pearson & Shanks 2001: 102-3)

The location of Brith Gof's performance finds an intriguing parallel in that of *Hamlet*, if we remind ourselves that the Oxford plant enjoyed a former manifestation as a Rover factory, but was sold and integrated into BMW Manufacturing in 2000. The difference highlighted here – between working and disused factory – holds the key to any comparison between the aesthetics and politics of the Creation Theatre production and those of Brith Gof's performative engagement with factory spaces. It is clear that an altogether different dynamic is produced when the factory is working and successful rather than disused and presented as a symbol of the decay caused by Thatcherism. Brith Gof's practice takes its site as "socially and politically charged" (Kaye 2000: 52), encouraging its audience to become engaged in a *reading* of the space while at the same time opening such a reading up to "multiple viewpoints" (55). In *Gododdin*, "the design centred upon the old factory clock suspended somewhat off-centre towards the middle" (Pearson & Shanks 2001: 103), supplying a tangible

symbol for the time-based system of commerce that had once, but no longer, ruled this space, and at the same time signalling the rhythmic shifts of this factory as central to the performance itself.

In contrast, while Creation Theatre's production suggests that the industrial space of the Oxford BMW plant might bring new understanding to *Hamlet*, the performance itself is not interested in bringing new understanding to its site. The relationship produced between site and performance is driven to a large extent by the powerful patterns of production and performance already associated with *Hamlet* as text and cultural artefact. Any new performance of *Hamlet* carries the memory of how, and by whom, the script has been performed in the past; the cumulative weight of this history stands alone and is not easily brought into dialogue with a new, non-theatre site. All the time, the site's rhythms are in service to the script, in a performance experiment that asks: what fresh meanings might we find in *Hamlet* if we apply to it the patterns and temporal structures of the factory?

Everyday rhythms

In contrast to the economy of trade and production in which the practices of industry participate, Michel de Certeau – perhaps the foremost theorizer of 'everyday life' – identifies the everyday practices of "reading, talking, dwelling, cooking, etc." as those "that produce without capitalizing, that is, without taking control over time" (1984: xx). The rhythms of the everyday, it is suggested, can only be said to 'beat time' in the sense in which a metronome does; they do not overpower or divert the temporal routine.

The notions of routine and habit are, after all, closely associated with everyday life as a theoretical construct. This construct has emerged in recent decades as a prominent focus in phenomenology and cultural studies and, more recently, the relatively new field of urban studies. In a paper that simultaneously traces the idea of 'everyday life' (through the works of de Certeau and Lefebvre, among many others) and questions its implications, Rita Felski argues that

everyday life is above all a temporal term. As such it conveys the fact of repetition; it refers not to the singular or unique but to that which happens 'day after day'. ... These daily rhythms complicate the self-understanding of modernity as permanent progress.

(1999/2000: 18-19)

While Felski here sets up the cyclical nature of everyday life in opposition to the linearity of modernity, she goes on to suggest that "the temporality of everyday life is internally complex: it combines repetition and linearity, recurrence with forward movement" (21). As well as pointing to the inherently rhythmic character of our understanding of everyday life, Felski's discussion is important because of its theoretical deconstruction of the term's ambiguities. Felski prompts us to ask a number of questions of the everyday: whose *everyday* is it?⁶ where are its boundaries? which practices does it include and which does it exclude? for what scholarly purposes does it hold significance? can we make it a fruitful theoretical concept while still preserving its essential 'ordinariness'?

For it is this *ordinariness* that must surely be a part of any attempt to define the everyday. To be observable and subject to analysis, the everyday needs to have a particular rhythm: that is, its constituent parts need to occur regularly. As Alan Read suggests,

it is useful to think of the everyday as that which escapes everything which is specialised, the ill-defined remainder to everything in life thought worthy of writing and record. It is habitual but not unchangeable and is therefore worth taking seriously, for it is the reality which we are made aware of when theatre is good and return to when theatre is done.

(1993: 17)

It is a definition, however, that only works so far: for what seems "specialised", out of the ordinary, to some is to others habitual, dull, mundane. The theatre may be a 'special place' to some, but it is always a workplace to others. Read attempts to address such complexities by asserting a (deliberately unstable) distinction between 'everyday life' and 'the everyday'.

Can theatre have value divorced from everyday life? Everyday life is the meeting ground for all activities associated with being human – work, play, friendship and the need to communicate, which includes the expressions of theatre. Everyday life is thus full of potential – it is the 'everyday' which

habitually dulls sense of life's possibilities. Theatre, when it is good, enables us to know the everyday in order better to live everyday life.

(1)

Though the distinction relied upon here may seem difficult to maintain, it does sketch out a basis for a relationship between everyday life, the 'everyday' and theatre: and we might add that the site-specific theatre that locates itself within the spaces of everyday life and takes everyday practices as its focus is in a position to produce its own particular set of knowledges of the everyday. While we could distinguish a set of activities on which to concentrate our attention here – eating, talking, shopping, working, playing, and so on – it is worth noting that much of what we might term 'everyday life' exists in the (often habitual) *movement between* these activities. Everyday rhythms emerge from the schedule that these practices produce – including the practice of moving *between* activities – and from the spatial and temporal patterns that they create.

Following de Certeau and the spaces that he privileges in his discussion of everyday life, the everyday with which I will be concerned here is that of the city and its streets, in this case London.

Site: London's East End (Whitechapel, Spitalfields and towards the City)

In order to begin to tease out some of the temporal implications of a London site, I want to include the voice of one of London's foremost commentators of recent times: Peter Ackroyd.

The nature of time in London is mysterious. It seems not to be running continuously in one direction, but to fall backwards and to retire; it does not so much resemble a stream or river as a lava flow from some unknown source of fire. Sometimes it moves steadily forward, before springing or leaping out; sometimes it slows down and, on occasions, it drifts and begins to stop altogether. There are some places in London where you would be forgiven for thinking that time has come to an end.

(2000: 661)

Ackroyd discerns a number of different manifestations of London time: sacred time (marked, for instance, by church bells), a chronology of events, a dominance of clock time (linked to commerce and the feeling that 'time is money'), and instances of

timelessness. The natural rhythms that I have identified above index time differently in London, as “even the sun, and the light, are mastered by the urgent rhythm of city activity” (662). Ackroyd acknowledges, too, that London is many different places at once, each area imposing “particular and identifiable” rhythms upon its inhabitants (665).

Others, too, have drawn on Ackroyd’s writings as a means of identifying and exploring possible points of connection between people, events and London topography. In their conclusions to the 1995 volume *Mapping the Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift point to the complexity of London as site, suggesting that it “consists of a constellation of different geo-political, semiotic, somatic and psychic spaces, each of them intertwined with the others in myriad encounters” (374-5). They set out two different ‘takes’ on the City/city of London, investigating its nature as ‘elite space’ through a discussion of business and power and as ‘subject-space’ through a case study of Peter Ackroyd’s novel *The House of Doctor Dee*⁷. In so doing, they map an everyday of London through “the specific time-space rhythms of the City which meant that the powerful tended to be in the same places at the same times each day (even down to the railway journey to work)” (376) and through a sense that the subject is constituted through a range of relationships to the city, creating a space that “must necessarily be simultaneously real, imaginary and symbolic” (380).

The specific area in and around Whitechapel with which I am concerned here might itself be understood through many of the relationships and rhythms identified by Peter Ackroyd and by Pile and Thrift. Moving between the library on Whitechapel High Street and the busy Liverpool Street Station the walker traverses a number of different categories of space. This is commuter space and market place; it combines mythological landscape and heritage site (creating a series of fictions about the Victorian east end inhabited by Jack the Ripper and the elephant man); it is work-a-day London but it is also shadowed by the sacred space of a Bishopsgate church. Its rhythms are created in the relationship between sites of movement and stillness, and times of movement and stillness. The long, narrow footpaths, for instance, invite a steady, constant movement and at busy times dictate the pace of that movement. The pace changes at the market stalls along Whitechapel High Street, where the traders

beat out a rhythm with their familiar chants; it slows down in the cafes around Commercial Street and at Liverpool Street Station, and takes on a different kind of stillness altogether in the hushed spaces of the library. And during the morning rush hour the workers form a mass whose movement is captured by T. S. Eliot in *The Waste Land*.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

(Eliot 1961: 53)

Here, poetic rhythms are used to evoke the clock-bound patterns that frame the working day of the city. The monotonous flow of people walking between station and workplace creates, then, one rhythm of this area; a rhythm that gains prominence as we move nearer to the part designated as City (with a capital C). These lines remind us also of the specifically gendered nature of these patterns.

The multiple and changing rhythms of the area with which I am concerned here combine to play a complex symphony, but its rapidity and diversity should not distract us from the suggestion – and Ackroyd’s ongoing thesis – that it seems endlessly to repeat itself. That Eliot’s lines, first published in 1922, should still ring true 80 years later begins to hint at this phenomenon, which Ackroyd argues

can be particularly noted in Spitalfields, where the passing generations have inhabited the same buildings and pursued the same activities of weaving and dying. It may be noticed that by the market of Spitalfields archaeologists have recovered successive levels of human activity dating back to the time of the Roman occupation.

(2000: 665)

It should also be noted that the city’s everyday rhythms do not operate in the same way for everyone who encounters them. Commenting on the concept of London timelessness, Ackroyd makes a telling observation: “neither vagrants nor children are on the same journey as those whom they pass on the crowded thoroughfares” (665).

Other groups, too, often experience a rhythm that runs counter to the dominant pattern. At different moments we might include in this category women, the elderly, and visitors.

Performance: The Missing Voice (Case Study B) (Janet Cardiff, 1999)

Janet Cardiff is a visitor to London. The artist, who is based in a small town in Canada, found that “the London experience enhanced the paranoia that I think is quite common to a lot of people, especially women, as they adjust to a strange city” (Cardiff 1999: 66). Originally an installation artist, Cardiff began in 1991 to make a series of audio-walks conceived and developed in and for particular spaces: these include a forest in Banff, Canada, the grounds of a Danish art museum, the cathedral and city squares of Münster, Germany, and the Villa Medici in Rome. Layering personal anecdote, the issuing of directions, spatial observations, audio samples from film and television, and fragments of mysterious narrative, the works become more than an intriguing soundtrack to their sites: they propose a mode of experiencing these spaces. Commissioned by Artangel in 1999 for the east end of London, *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* is Cardiff’s most ambitious experiment with this art-form to date (Scott 1999). The piece invites the user, having collected a Discman from Whitechapel Library, to follow a recorded set of narratives on a 45 minute walk through the surrounding spaces. The recording ends by depositing its user at Liverpool Street Station, from which point he or she must navigate back to the library with the aid of a map found in the Discman’s pouch.

Through its inclusion here as an example I am making a claim for *The Missing Voice* as site-specific performance, though it is important to note that, unlike other works I discuss in this chapter, it has not developed out of specifically theatrical practices. Described by Artangel as “part urban guide, part fiction, part film noir”, the work falls somewhere between existing categories: defining it as ‘performance art’ perhaps tells us something about the work, but this obscures its palpable engagement with a sense of the everyday and the tourist encounter that it traces. One implication of this lack of theatrical frame is that the processes that Schechner identifies as shaping the modern Western theatre experience do not apply here; therefore, other patterns of movement – of arrival and departure – come into play. These patterns are derived in part from the

vast field that we might label 'the everyday' and include practices of navigating, commuting, shopping, browsing and, generally, walking in the city.

The performance site is constructed in and between a number of different spaces (outlined in my discussion above). The nature of the event is that the spectator necessarily moves through the site, and this lends a rhythm to the experience that is markedly different from the rhythm of sitting throughout a performance. Walking itself becomes a focus of the work and, as such, is opened up to the processes of contemplation and reflection; *The Missing Voice* is to a large extent structured through the dynamic beat of footsteps and the contrasting moments when these cease.

*I'm going to go outside
try to follow the sound of my footsteps
so that we can stay together⁸*

Almost at the beginning of Janet Cardiff's audio-walk, the walker is asked to pay attention to the beat marked out by (we assume) Cardiff's own recorded footsteps and to use this sound to regulate his or her own rhythm of walking. It has been noted, in fact, that "walkers often become self-conscious about their stride, wanting to match Cardiff's exactly" (Scott 1999: 16). The regularity of the footsteps (which, as Jonathon Romney has suggested in his review in *The Guardian*, "click away like a metronome guiding your tempo") acts as a link between the spaces of the performance, in a work that mobilizes its site through its literal movement as well as through the narrative bridge to other, fictional, spaces that it creates. While at first the footsteps are introduced as those of the narrator, they seem at times to become your own, their sound merging with the vibration as you walk to Cardiff's count ("five six seven eight nine"). At other points they pass to an anonymous third party ("there's a man in a black suit walking behind you"), who may or may not appear to be represented by an actual passer-by. The rhythm of the footsteps, therefore, performs across a number of layers of the audio-walk and becomes emblematic of the event as a whole. As Peter Ackroyd proposes, "it may be that the perpetual steady echo of passing footsteps is the true sound of London in its transience and in its permanence" (2000: 80).

In many ways, then, Cardiff creates a tight structure through which the ‘everyday’ is experienced. Unlike the spatial practices that de Certeau terms ‘walking in the city’, *The Missing Voice* issues instructions that prevent the participant from choosing his or her own ‘pedestrian speech acts’.

If it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.

(de Certeau 1984: 98)

Much of the potential for improvisation thus available to the pedestrian is blocked as soon as that pedestrian becomes the spectator in Janet Cardiff’s performance event. In an essay on Cardiff’s audio-walks published by Artangel as part of its documentation of *The Missing Voice*, curator and critic Kitty Scott suggests that the long “musical interludes of popular, religious and wedding songs” afford the opportunity to the walker or “co-conspirator” to “pause and replay fragments of the story in your mind” (1999: 14). But this replaying action is one that can take place only in the mind and not in reality. Before the walk begins, a library assistant explains that the Discman will not allow the user to skip back through the CD, and therefore the process of editing that might have been conducted by the walker – creating effects of repetition or ellipsis – is restricted. There are, however, other possibilities available to the spectator/walker to change the rhythms of *The Missing Voice*. The soundtrack can, in fact, be paused, and, there being no live performance presence with which to interact, this allows for moments of change not prescribed by the artist. Passing through a busy shopping street, for instance, the walker might decide to rush into a shop to make a purchase; on being instructed to sit on a bench beside a church, he or she might pause the CD and extend the period of relaxation.

And the walk itself seems in some ways to invite a relaxation of the strict rhythms of its London spaces.

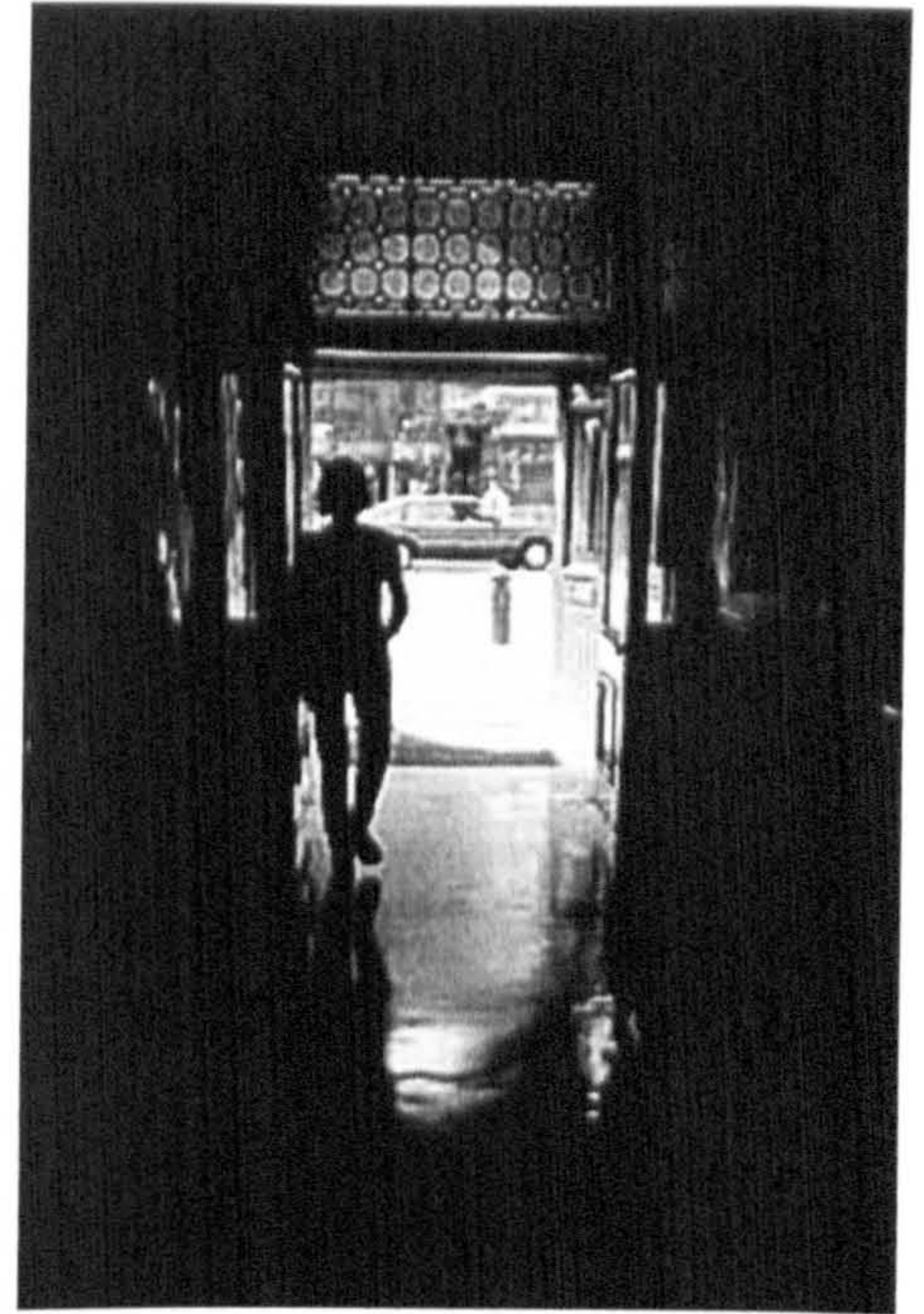
The city oppresses its inhabitants, and the evidence of that oppression can be found in the time it imposes; there is a time for eating, a time for

working, a time for travelling to work, a time for sleeping. It represents the great triumph of materialism and commerce within the city.

(Ackroyd 2000: 663)

Perhaps the most immediately apparent way in which *The Missing Voice* could be said to interrupt or work against the rhythms of its site is in its implicit defiance of the modes of temporal oppression that Ackroyd notes. If in this manner it cannot quite be said to 'beat' time, it certainly mounts a challenge to the dominant temporal order. The pragmatic arrangements for the collection and return of the Discman in order to carry out the walk mean that it can only be done during library opening hours, which, in the main, are also standard working hours – times when the assumption is that the walker-spectator *should* be doing something else (more commercially productive). But this still leaves a range of time-frames available for the walk: weekday or weekend, morning or afternoon, rush hour, lunchtime, winter or summer, and so on. The nature of the piece means that any one spectator might experience the walk through more than one of these time-frames. Participation in *The Missing Voice* is free of charge (requiring only the returnable deposit of a passport or credit card) and, once mounted, costs no more for the artist or the host (Whitechapel Library) to run. It is therefore (potentially infinitely) repeatable, and this is very different to the possibility available to the spectator to attend more than one performance of even a long-running West End show. *The Missing Voice* is potentially not one walk, but many.

This potential – to be more than one walk – operates on another level in my argument. Returning to the equivalents of Schechner's processes of gathering and dispersing that might apply in the context of the quotidian, the processes required to move to and from, respectively, the start and end points of the walk are significant. What I am interested in here, therefore, is not just one walk – the performative walk created by Cardiff as artist – but three interdependent walks. My suggestion is that part of the way in which the rhythmic structures of the work achieve their effects is through their unstated relationship to the initial walk to Whitechapel Library in order to collect the Discman and to the later walk back to the library from Liverpool Street Station, where Cardiff's commentary concludes. If we read Cardiff's walk through a theoretical framework of rhythms we can better articulate how it works and how it impinges on the journeys taken either side of it.

Figure 14: Janet Cardiff, *The Missing Voice* (1999)

The point I want to make about these other journeys is a simple one: that the walk back to the library, having finished the CD commentary, is rhythmically different to the earlier walk to the library before starting the performance. The senses have been heightened by the process of participating in *The Missing Voice* and for a while it is difficult not to remain hyper-aware of the people and places one passes. The recent memory of Cardiff's walk challenges not only the established rhythm of the city but also its rules.

The Missing Voice frames the everyday, drawing attention to its ordinariness and in the process making it seem *extraordinary* and performative. Through its simultaneous similarity and difference to other (everyday) walks in the city, it acts out the invitation to the imagination that Alan Read has noted:

Theatre is a process of vital divergence from everyday life: it does not simply reflect the everyday but as with the simplest pedestrian dance diversifies its habitual patterns and opens its place of occurrence to the imagination.

(1993: 171)

Standing overlooking the railway station concourse at the end of the audio-walk, the walker is told:

*I like watching the people from here
all these lives heading off in different directions
one story overlapping with another*

The removal of the headphones (following the instruction to “please return the discman as soon as possible”) does not altogether remove this performative frame, because the walker has been primed to continue to see passers-by as characters within overlapping stories. *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* makes explicit the rhythms of the everyday life of the city by positioning its user as participant in, rather than spectator of, those rhythms. At the same time, Janet Cardiff interrupts the patterns of city life with narrative rhythms, thereby inviting her listeners to occupy her own position of visitor, somehow outside of the “general pulse of people and power which keeps [London’s] heart beating” (Ackroyd 2000: 457).

Layering time on Bristol dock

The examples discussed in this chapter have pointed to the potential fruitfulness of constructing a theoretical frame of rhythms through which to consider performances beyond the theatre building. Such a frame needs the flexibility to acknowledge the variety of relationships between spatial rhythms and performance that emerge from these analyses. We have seen how rhythms might be used to structure a performance event, to explore an existing text, or to question a series of roles that might be adopted within a city environment. Given this variety, it will be useful here to consider the possibilities for the layering of a number of temporal patterns within one performance. A recent non-theatre-based performance emerging from the British mainstream offers a rich example structured around a series of different yet interlinking rhythms; it is a production that references some of the simplistic post-industrial politics of community theatre models, but whose attitude towards its site is intriguingly complicated by its participation in, and enjoyment of, the current dynamics of the space.

*She’s coming in,
She’s coming in,*

*Our ship's coming in ...*⁹

In 1997 the Bristol Old Vic first staged A.C.H. Smith's *Up the Feeder, Down the Mouth and Back Again*, a play commissioned by the theatre to tell the story (or stories) of Bristol dock and its working community. Forged from the conversation and anecdote of those who could remember the life of the working docks, the play might be located in a context that includes, among others, the practices of the Joan Littlewood Theatre Workshop and the development of David Edgar's *Entertaining Strangers*¹⁰. In June and July of 2001 the Bristol Old Vic staged a revival of the previous production, this time not in its city-centre theatre building but in the Industrial Museum at Princes Wharf, Bristol Docks.

Initially it might be noted that the performance itself is overtly rhythmic, in the sense that it foregrounds its specially composed music as an original feature of the show. The character of Spot acts as narrator – almost in the style of a Greek chorus – and performs the songs live as an integral part of her narration, accompanied by a live band. When the show ends, the band and Spot reprise some of the songs as the audience is led out across the quayside; spectators then have the chance to purchase the music in the form of a 'soundtrack' available on audio cassette or compact disc.

So music creates a frame through which the rhythmic qualities of the performance are made immediately apparent. As the playwright suggests, though, in his introduction to the souvenir script, "there is, in fact, more than one frame. A ship comes in, is unloaded, loaded up again, and steams out. A day's work starts and finishes. A docker reaches the last day of his working life and remembers the first. The city docks is a thriving workplace with its own long history, and is closed down" (Smith 2001: 6). These are the structuring devices of the writing itself, the patterns and metaphors through which its personal stories are told. But other rhythms start to operate when these scripted patterns are performed: industrial rhythms, of course, but those of nature and of the everyday as well.

Perhaps more significantly, the production makes explicit its position between site-specificity and the traditional theatre, experimenting with the rhythmic shifts between these two modes. This distinction is already implicit in the production's 'biography'

– a building-based company occupying a place in this country’s mainstream theatre practice relocates a previous production to a non-theatre site – but is explored further through the staging itself.

On entering the performance space at the Industrial Museum my initial reaction was one of disappointment: I had hoped to see a production that teased out the performative possibilities of its dockside setting, but instead the space had been used in such a way that it closely resembled a theatre auditorium. About ten minutes into the performance, however, a ship’s foghorn sounds loudly and the large metal doors at the back of the stage open to reveal the quayside with a ship coming in to dock.

This is the pivotal moment of the performance, described by Lyn Gardner in her review in *The Guardian* as “surely one of the most spectacular sights we’ll see in British theatre this decade” (2 July 2001). It acts out a double-unveiling: not only are the docks and the large steamer revealed to us, the spectators, but we are simultaneously revealed – and presented as spectacle – to those across the water walking through the regenerated waterfront area. A new, accidental, audience is created, whose sudden inclusion in the event causes the existing, knowing, audience

Figure 15: Bristol Old Vic, *Up the Feeder* (2001)



to become overtly aware of its position in relation to the performance; the moment, therefore, serves to perform the very act of spectating.

From this point on, the performance shifts a number of times between its interior ‘theatre auditorium’ state and its external dockside setting (Figure 15). The network of rhythms structuring the piece – a working day; a ship coming in to dock and then leaving; a working life; the life of the docks – is symbolized in the actual sunset at the site, which is revealed to us in stages as a theatrical device. Usually going to the theatre in Britain in the summer means moving from daylight into the darkened auditorium, only to emerge two hours later to find, with a sudden shock, that the day has turned to night. Traditionally the interval affords a glimpse into the half-way stage of this process. This familiar experience is acted out repeatedly in *Up the Feeder*, with the pattern of the closing and opening of the doors revealing the change of light much more gradually than is normally the case in the traditional theatre. As the performance bridges the gap between sunlight and sunset, the natural rhythms of the site – particularly those of the dialectic played out between light and dark, day and night – are made to carry metaphorical weight: ‘standing for’ a set of wider rhythms in the narrative.

She’s under way ...

She’s under way ...

Our ship’s under way ...

It is worth briefly returning, however, to the example of the matinee with which I began this chapter. What happens to my reading of the Bristol Old Vic’s *Up the Feeder* when we consider that a small number of its performances were matinees? In these instances the setting sun could not have foregrounded the cycle of the performance themes in quite the way that I have suggested it did on the Saturday evening on which I attended. The rhythmic shifts of the performance, then, play out with altered effects on different occasions and at different times. We might argue that the matinees moved the emphasis instead onto the changing everyday patterns in the regenerated dock area as the afternoon progresses.

Princes Wharf, the programme notes tell us, is the only part of the City Docks that “survives as a reminder of the hard landscape of the commercial port”. Surrounding

the site of the Industrial Museum are shops, cafes, bars, restaurants, galleries, an arts centre, and newly commissioned modern sculpture: representatives of a familiar narrative in the post-industrial waterfront areas of urban centres across the country. This is an area to go out in, to relax – a major part of the city's leisure 'industry' – and spectators of *Up the Feeder* are simultaneously spectators of its everyday rhythms.

Everyday rhythms resonate on another, localized, level through the performance's use of regional rhythms of speech. Though not performed as a community play, *Up the Feeder*'s cast comprises actors who have, in the main, been born or trained in Bristol; their speech patterns, then, forge a further correspondence with the site. This cultural-specificity invites a particular relationship with the spectators: it creates, in fact, a doubled audience, the members of which are sorted by the performance material into Bristol inhabitants and visitors. The same effect is echoed in the local references that pepper the script, drawing on the knowledge of part of the audience of pubs, street names and the character of particular neighbourhoods, while casting the remainder of the audience as visitors and thus stressing the extended site to which the performance is specific.

That the performance is, in part, shaped through the industrial rhythms emerging from its site is perhaps more self-evident, but it is worth dwelling for a moment on the form that these rhythms take. *Up the Feeder*'s sense of time here is deliberately discontinuous, pointing implicitly to a moment when industrial rhythms stopped, fundamentally altering everyday and biological rhythms as a result. There are ideological implications, for instance, in marking the steady beat of the industrial work of a specific past, made explicit particularly in the section in which a banana boat is unloaded, but echoed at other points in the movement and voices of the large cast. Through these moments, *Up the Feeder* locates itself within a history of the communal creation of workers' rhythms; a history that has developed through slave spirituals, gumboot dancing, and so on, and is manifested here in the banana song.

*Skin boats are bringing
Green ripers and plantains,
Musa sapientiums,
Grass mitchells.
Big ends aft now men.
Before they yellow they're*

*First Class passengers,
Atlantic swells.*¹¹

Building in power through its repetition, this is music that both responds to the rhythm of work and helps the workers to maintain that rhythm. Moreover, it becomes a form of working class communication and thus performs a collaborative message.

The collaboration performed is not only that between workers, but that between worker and machinery and, by extension, between worker, machinery and site (recalling Baz Kershaw's account of "dancing to the drill-bits" of a Manchester engineering works (1999: 1)). Certainly, the machinery belonging to a bygone era of Bristol dock is made a focal point of the production. As one reviewer writes, *Up the Feeder* is a "vehicular spectacular. Forklift trucks buzz by as a crane swings into action. A steam train shunts into view and ... a huge ship with rusty bows docks under your nose" (Kate Bassett in *The Independent*, 9 July 2001). Indeed, the fact that "every time someone laments the death of something, it pops up on the quayside" (Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, 08 July 2001) performs a partial reversal of time, contributing to the cumulative effect that I want to argue was the result of this production's layering of rhythms.

Through its shifts within the temporal mode, *Up the Feeder* creates, albeit temporarily, a new rhythm for its site. The devices of live music, direct address to the audience, and a fast-moving jokey banter in the dialogue combine to perform a seduction, drawing the spectators in to the performance in order to be able to introduce some undercurrents of resistance to a certain reading of the site. By using theatrical rhythms to resurrect a set of industrial rhythms that were formerly part of the site and yet have lain dormant since the closure of the dock, the performance seems to posit a familiar political argument that would align it with the nostalgia of a mode of community arts practice of the '70s. We might think of this as a way of *beating time*: manipulating the chronology of the site in order to undermine or counteract the implications of its present-day rhythms.

But the industrial rhythms of the site cannot now exist in isolation (did they ever?); indeed, the production works by enjoying the present-day rhythms of its site alongside its evocation of the working docks. By layering everyday, natural and theatrical

patterns with the patterns of industry, *Up the Feeder* brings the resurrected working rhythms into dialogue with the new rhythms of the leisure 'industry' at work in the regenerated dock. This dialogue is furthered through the presence of the spectators, whose gathering and dispersing processes take them through the city spaces that the performance frames for them. If Smith's script seems sometimes to be positing an 'authentic' past for this site, the live production dances to the varying tunes of both past and present manifestations of the spaces of Bristol dock.

Time-space: a dramaturgy of rhythm

The essential unit of geography is not spatial, it lies in regions of time-space and in the relation of such units to the larger spatio-temporal configurations. Geography is the study of these configurations. Marx once said, 'one must force the frozen circumstances to dance by singing to them their own melody'. The frozen circumstances of space only come alive when the melody of time is played.

(Thrift 1996 :1 (citing his own earlier work))

Analysis that rediscovers time makes explicit representational space that appears to be lost to modern systems of spatial understanding.

(Liggett 1995: 256)

In a text book examining poetic metre and form, Paul Fussell begins with a famous statement by Ezra Pound: "‘Rhythm *must* have meaning,’ Ezra Pound insisted in 1915. And he is right" (Fussell 1979: 3; original emphasis). Beyond the abstraction of written poetry, however, we find ourselves dealing with a range of rhythmic dynamics emerging out of a variety of sources and each acting on the others in different ways. How are we to make meaning (or meanings) of this?

I began this exploration by pointing to the ways in which others – specifically Pearson and Shanks, Bachelard, Lefebvre and Crang – have addressed this question of space, time and meaning. Travelling from this starting point, I have tried to understand the play of meanings created out of spatial rhythms by attending to those rhythms that might be described as 'natural', 'industrial' or 'everyday'. Though these are problematic categories, they also carry potential for ways of imagining rhythmanalysis beyond the invariably urban context of existing theoretical frameworks. Added to the rhythms that are of the site – 'found' rhythms, perhaps – it

has also been significant that performance itself brings its own rhythms. As Schechner has indicated, “the pattern of gathering, performing and dispersing is a specifically theatrical pattern” (1988: 158), one that, we might add, acts out a negotiation with the non-theatrical patterns that it finds in its site. Site-specific performance occupies a particularly interesting position in relation to temporal structures, negotiating a position between performance’s theatrical suspension of ‘actual’ for ‘virtual’ time, and site-specificity’s intervention into actual time. In the light of the analyses I have given of a range of performances, we begin to have the means to recast Schechner’s pattern differently as it comes into contact with a variety of non-theatre spaces.

Just as those performances that have been labelled ‘durational’ disrupt the ‘normal’ time-pattern in which theatre operates (whereby a performance is deemed to give an evening’s entertainment lasting, say, two hours with an interval), so the performances I have drawn on here have variously (and to differing degrees) used spatial patterns and structures to disrupt theatrical ones, or vice versa. Kate Lawrence and Janine Creaye’s *St Catherine’s Chapel Performance* combines contrasting performative registers (emerging out of the practices of tourism and dance) and the patterns of light, movement and landscape texture to perform a re-staging of the gathering-performing-dispersing process. A markedly different approach is adopted by Creation Theatre, whose *Hamlet* is read anew through its factory site; here, the industrial structures found in the site are de-located, lending aesthetic effects to the performance. Janet Cardiff’s *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)*, occurring for the sole spectator in ‘real’ time and ‘real’ space and yet without a live performer, clearly disrupts the traditional theatrical model of performance, at the same time framing and questioning those structures and practices that appear to be of London’s everyday. Finally, I have identified in the Bristol Old Vic’s *Up the Feeder, Down the ‘Mouth and Back Again* – a mainstream performance that seems to cohere to the traditional gathering-performing-dispersing pattern – a more subtle process of chronological play that serves to explore the temporal patterns performed at Bristol Dock.

The result is that we might envisage a space as a web of rhythmic patterns, each acting on the others in a variety of ways. From this model, we are able to explore an intrinsically temporal approach to the analysis of site-specific performance. That is,

by exploring the notion of rhythms we are able to introduce a schematics of time into our means of responding to the practices of site-specificity. What emerges might be termed a *dramaturgy of rhythm*, a means by which we can understand and articulate the effects of a range of aesthetics and practices through their temporal responses to the performance site. This might be one way of combating the ethical problems that have been associated with heritage or touristic approaches to site, by considering every performance space not as frozen in “a palimpsest of past activity” (Bender 1998: 26) but in a process of motion and change. Furthermore, following Lefebvre, the concept of rhythm as critical manoeuvre involves a recognition of the analyst’s position as self-reflexive, operating both as an observer and a creator of the rhythmic spaces explored. This path of self-reflexivity is followed further in the last of the explorations of this thesis, as we turn to the role – my role, in this chapter – of the spectator.

¹ June – July 2001 at Princes Wharf, Bristol City Docks. Directors: Gareth Machin and Heather Williams; designer: Mick Bearwish; writer: A C H Smith; original music: John O'Hara.

² www.artform.demon.co.uk/stcatherines.htm

³ Guildford, incidentally, was Lewis Carroll's family home, and he is buried in one of its churchyards.

⁴ National Theatre, 1993.

⁵ In fact, given its shift patterns of working, it is unusual that this particular site should have a dormant period in which it might be used for the purpose of performance.

⁶ Because of the practices most closely associated with it – de Certeau's "reading, talking, dwelling, cooking" – there has been a tendency to equate the everyday with women, the cycle, and the world of home rather than men, progress, and the world of work. Such a simplified (and outdated) construction is of course complicated further by the fact that, in the age of the Internet and other communication technology, the practice of 'working from home' conflates what were previously seen as separate zones.

⁷ Penguin 1993. The novel centres on a house and surrounding streets in Clerkenwell, London, exploring the 'connectedness' of history and spatial subjectivity between two lives lived there across a gap of four centuries.

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, quotations are taken from Cardiff's performance text, included in an 'Artangel Afterlives' publication, 1999.

⁹ Quotations taken from Smith's script and lyrics, 2001.

¹⁰ This was commissioned by the prominent community theatre practitioner Ann Jellicoe, to be created for and in conjunction with the people of Dorchester, Dorset. It was later revised by Edgar and performed by professional actors at the Royal National Theatre.

¹¹ The music follows a basic repetitive canon rhythm common to workers' songs: it is in steady 4/4 time and consists entirely of quaver and crotchet notes.

Chapter Six: Hybrid Identities Space and Spectatorship

The theatre's raw material is not the actor, nor the space, nor the text, but the attention, the seeing, the hearing, the mind of the spectator. Theatre is the art of the spectator.
(Eugenio Barba, *The Paper Canoe*)

The floodlights have moved away from the actors who possess proper names and social blazons, turning first towards the chorus of secondary characters, then settling on the mass of the audience.
(Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*)

In the final exploration of the thesis, I want to invoke again the space/performance/audience model with which I have been working, but this time to focus explicitly on the complexities of the *audience* in this regard. My strategy here is one of accumulation, whereby the critical movement of the discussion (from two points of departure and through a series of reflexive and theoretical spaces and spaces of performance practice) is seen to develop a nuanced and layered means of understanding spectatorship in the context of site-specificity. Arguing that *something* changes for the spectator when performance engages dynamically with its site, I negotiate between concepts drawn from literature, performance, reception theory and the earlier parts of the thesis in pursuit of ways in which this *something* might be articulated and analysed.

Points of departure

Consider the “meta-theatre” of Mr Conchis.

The eponymous character of John Fowles's 1966 novel *The Magus* conceives “a new kind of drama” to be played out on the Greek island of ‘Phraxos’, enveloping the young British teacher Nicholas Urfe in its complex web. This is not an ‘invisible theatre’ of the kind imagined by Boal (1992); or rather, it enjoys playing between this invisible mode and a more overt declaration of its performance status. A number of

frameworks for understanding the unfolding narratives are offered successively to Urfe and, through him, to the readers. Shifting flexibly and often indiscernibly between theatre, game and 'everyday life', the experiment carried out by Conchis seems to play across a number of the categories favoured by Richard Schechner in his theories of performance. It is through these shifts, and particularly through Urfe's frequent inability to distinguish between the categories in play, that the magus figure embodied by Conchis hopes to effect a change in Urfe's future social behaviour. Comparisons with Boal, then, are not altogether misleading. If this is theatre, it is one that seeks a moral and social efficacy in the time-space beyond its physical realization. Conchis asserts that its power in this regard is drawn from its unique position in relation to the theatre audience:

'During the war, when I had a great deal of time to think, and no friends to amuse me, I conceived a new kind of drama. One in which the conventional separation between actors and audience was abolished. In which the conventional scenic geography, the notions of proscenium, stage, auditorium, were completely discarded. In which continuity of performance, either in time or place, was ignored. And in which the action, the narrative was fluid, with only a point of departure and a fixed point of conclusion. Between those points the participants invent their own drama.' His mesmeric eyes pinned mine. 'You will find that Artaud and Pirandello and Brecht were all thinking, in their different ways, along similar lines. But they had neither the money nor the will – and doubtless not the time – to think as far as I did. The element they could not bring themselves to discard was the audience.'

(Fowles 1997: 404)

To the list of shortcomings that Conchis perceives in the theatrical explorations of Artaud, Pirandello and Brecht – lack of money, will and time – we might add lack of place; this is a meta-theatre that can only function in its particular surroundings. Location is important here, but so is the linked sense of dislocation: Conchis is *at home* on the island, while Urfe is conspicuously *out of place*. The site itself performs a literal *insularity* – functioning within the overlaid narratives to cut the action off from the outside world and prevent easy escape – and it is an insularity that both recalls and opposes that of Urfe's native Britain. Phraxos represents an exotic 'other' to Britain, a place in which Urfe is subjected to unfamiliar rules of behaviour and movement. There is an argument to be made for Conchis's experiment as site-specific performance (the ways in which it is not site-specific, and, indeed, not *performance*, I will, for the current purposes, set aside). That it might also, and more

particularly, be said to be *audience-specific* – tailored to its audience of one who does not always know that he is performing this role – mounts a challenge to the claim for the discarding of the audience. Returning to the terms in which Boal has established his Theatre of the Oppressed, Urfe is encouraged here to become the invisible theatre's 'spect-actor'.

Consider also Bert O. States's yellow cows.

In an essay exploring the impact of various metaphorical uses of performance, States challenges the impulse in that field labelled 'performance studies' (and seen most clearly in the work of Richard Schechner) that has embraced a range of non-theatrical practices – "hostage crises, terrorist activities, Ph.D. orals, and wild animal parks" (1996: 25) – as performance. By way of an ironic response to such an impulse, he posits as performance a field of cows painted yellow.

What would make it a performance--or, to be more exacting, a performative event--is the manipulation or mediation of empirical reality toward what is surely an artistic statement being made about reality. If Robert Whitman's warehouse in *Light Touch* or the people eating their own dinner in their own apartment in Hungary's Squat Theatre, or certain Happenings of the sixties, can be called performances, then my yellow cows must surely qualify. And I can only think that Schechner would have to agree. We are, after all, seeing behavior through a deliberate frame.

(16)

Again, I would want to assert that if this is performance, it is site-specific, understandable only through its spatial context and formulating a critical response to that context. Asking "if you 'deconstruct' performance at what precise point does it disappear?" (13), States makes a number of suggestions that might point to possible answers. There is, firstly, the "deliberate frame" that removes behaviour, perhaps only temporarily, from its everyday situation. This notion of framing remains pertinent when we consider site-specific performances of more complexity than the yellow cows; the frame need not be static but might shift, be displaced or overlap with others. Secondly, States is interested in establishing a grounding of *pleasure* in 'artistic performance' (a term that enables him to distinguish his understanding of performance from, for example, that of Goffman), suggesting that performance begins with "the human desire to participate in performative transformations".

This originary moment contains, for States, “an abiding interest in the spectacular possibilities of the world” (25), which leads me to the third basis of performance that I want to extrapolate from his text. If, as States suggests, performance resides not in an end-product but in a particular way of seeing, it is, perhaps, the existence of an audience that confirms the validity of the label. Performance, then, “survives only in the encounter and re-encounter of the spectator” (11). What is significant for us is States’s rejection of the (presumed necessary) separation of audience and performers, offering instead the possibility of “the collapse of means and ends into each other, the simultaneity of producing something and responding to it in the same behavioral act” (25). In other words, the artist, performer or creator might simultaneously produce and respond, make and see, perform and spectate.

Both of the examples with which I have begun deal with extremes, staging an explicit debate over the “without-which-not” (States 1996: 13) of performance. In doing so, they articulate potential (or hypothetical) practices that call into question the nature of the theatre spectator. Conchis’s meta-theatre and States’s yellow cows are, in different ways, dislocated from a number of markers that would declare their status as performance, including Raymond Williams’s signals of time and place (Williams 1981). But I have suggested that in neither case is the audience entirely removed, although it might not be instantly recognized as such. Even ignoring Fowles’s writerly framing that casts us, the readers, as the spectators of Conchis’s meta-theatre, the character of Nicholas Urfe functions as internal spectator, particularly in his moments of awareness that something is being performed for him. That he is also required to play the roles of teacher, student, unwitting performer, tourist and lover does not release him from the witnessing power of spectatorship. And because, for States, the performance is what takes place “when spectator and work come together” (1996: 17), the role of spectator might be taken on by whoever recognizes or notes the existence of the metaphorical frame surrounding the yellow cows, be that person the painter or the passer-by.

The performances with which I have been concerned throughout this thesis have tended to retain many of the recognizable theatrical markers; these have variously

included time, audience arrangement, conscious framing of performative action, marketing that applies theatrical labels to the event, and so on. But, of course, they have in common (with each other and with the examples provided by Fowles and States) a deliberate dislocation of Williams's 'place' signal: the removal of the event from the theatre building. It is a move that, I want to argue, recasts the spectatorial role, turning the audience into something else (or, in many cases, making use of the 'something else' that the audience already was).

Subject: Re: Site-spec survey etc
Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2002 14:28:49 +0000 (GMT Standard Time)
From: Catherine Turner
To: Fiona Wilkie

Dear Fiona,

The question of 'new audiences' is one that fascinates me. I think that by placing performance within the everyday, one is bound to encounter new audiences and this is part of the purpose of s-s work. BUT I am constantly amazed and in awe of people's ability to assimilate the unexpected into their own frame of reference! For instance, when Wrights & Sites went on a derive¹ recently, various roles were ascribed to us, 'explaining' our otherwise incomprehensible wandering and staring: at dawn, on the outskirts of town, we were assumed to be 'on the way to Tesco's'; later, in the centre, Phil was assumed to be a traffic warden. When Stephen Hodge did his piece for the Exeter bus fleet, a passenger was overheard interpreting his fragmentary text as being something to do with tax.

It's creative, in a way. And I suppose these are audiences, but they don't perceive themselves to be such. I suppose I feel that access is opened up slowly by chipping away at notions of what places are for whom and what art is for whom, questioning all those categories and boundaries. I don't totally buy the idea that finding new audiences is a question of putting art under people's noses - although a sense of art as being 'not for us' is certainly alienating.

*Best,
 Cathy²*

Siting the spectator

Let us recall Peter Brook's formulation of the preconditions for an act of theatre to be engaged: the man who walks across the 'empty space' does so whilst someone else watches him (Brook 1996: 9). The relationship proposed here is essentially a human one – that between spectator and performer – and the performance space, prior to the meeting of these figures, is characterized as 'empty'. Such a relationship, it can be seen, is not enough to account for the spectatorial encounter with the practices on

which I have focused here. If site-specificity is defined in terms of spatial engagement (as I hope the previous chapters have demonstrated in a variety of ways), any means of responding to it must also engage with issues of space. In this chapter, then, I want to think about the reception processes at work in site-specific performance, formulating my concerns in this regard through a set of linked questions:

- What does it mean to experience site-specific performance as a spectator?
- What happens to the viewing experience when the space is not a theatre building?
- And how might we define the relationship between spectator, performance and site?

Just as in the ‘meta-theatre’ of Mr Conchis, we have taken our points of departure and move now towards a fixed point of conclusion, where I will argue that, above all, the ‘site-specific spectator’ inhabits a *hybrid identity*. Between these points we too will trace a fluid narrative, exploring the implications for site-specific practices of a number of constructions of viewing, spectating and experiencing performance. Throughout, the figure of de Certeau’s pedestrian remains in view, reminding us of the creative power of the ostensibly passive user of spaces, stories, and spatial stories.

It emerged from the survey described in Chapter Two that many practitioners seek both new audiences and new performance–audience relationships through their site-specific stance. But the survey also points to the breadth and variety of performance practices collected under the heading ‘site-specific’ and therefore, by implication, to the breadth and variety of spectatorial experiences on offer. Between these practices – the live art bias of Justin Mckeown and Anne-Marie Culhane, the privileging of process in the work of Welfare State International and The Olimpias, the popular forms employed by IOU Theatre and Walk the Plank, the text-based theatres of the Pentabus and Creation Theatre Companies, the sheer scale of the work of Station House Opera, and the political complexes articulated by Brith Gof – the hunt for a common discourse might find itself lost in a confusing network of shared paths and dead ends, circular routes and blind alleys. And the confusion would seem to be compounded rather than eased when we recall the range of performances that I have used as the basis for detailed analysis in previous chapters: *Bubbling Tom*, *The York*

Millennium Mystery Plays, St Catherine's Chapel Performance, Hamlet, The Missing Voice (Case Study B), and Up the Feeder, Down the 'Mouth and Back Again. If site-specific performance emerges from this study as a recognizable mode of practice, it is one that (unlike, we might argue, feminist theatre) is without a distinct shared ideology. My feeling is that it is also without a shared audience. With the exception of those academics who seek out the site-specific, and (possibly) a core group of newspaper critics³, the multiple and changing discourses rehearsed and developed by these performances seem to find no recognizable public that might act as conduit for the forms and ideas thus expressed. How, then, can we generalize about the role of the spectator across such a wide theatrical context?

We might begin by considering the means by which site-specificity itself performs an invitation to its potential audience: that is, the *siting* of the spectators prior to the performance. One thing that all site-specific practices do is to (implicitly or explicitly) advertise their difference from the more common theatre practices occurring in theatre buildings. In doing so, they blur the "systems of social signals that what is now to be made available is to be regarded as art" (Williams 1981: 130), perhaps setting up "alternative signals" but inviting us to question whether these new signals point "unambiguously to 'art'" (135). In the terms of the enquiry begun in Chapter Three, this can be understood as relating to the play between differing sets of rules. New rules, the marketing promises, will be created by this unusual event, which can by turns embrace and distance itself from the rules of both the site and the theatre as institution. The dual effect of site-specificity might then be to propose both a new way of experiencing theatre and a new way of experiencing the site.

So we are dealing with a sense of the particular audience expectations that are created when a performance is described under the label 'site-specific', and these might be understood as contributing to the development of a more general "horizon of expectations" (Jauss, in Rice & Waugh 1992). Though many survey respondents indicated other, related, labels that might replace 'site-specific' in marketing contexts, these alternatives still emphasize the new spatial context of the work or its unique relationship to place. It seems, then, that there is a particular currency in using such terms. Novelty and the possibility, perhaps, of "seeing the familiar in a new way" (Meredith Monk, cited in Kaye 2000: 214), or of following the performance as a

guide into unfamiliar territory, combine to suggest that there is something seductive for the spectator in the site-specific event itself. Whatever other stance it takes with regard to its site, it functions as 'something different' for an audience used either to performance in a theatre building or to the site without the performative frame.

While "undoubtedly each particular variety of playing space provides the audience with specific expectations and interpretive possibilities" (Bennett 1997: 127), the site of site-specific performance is more explicitly foregrounded as a locus of potential meanings. The site-specific mode, then, displaces some of the attention of its audience from performance content (the traditional focus of proscenium theatre) and structure (a focus of analytical approaches derived from literary studies)⁴ to performance site, and indeed will often blur these categories.

Consequently, this metaphorical and literal siting of the spectator prior to the performance begins to draw up possibilities for the ways in which the event will be experienced and interpreted. Susan Bennett (1997: 104) has argued that

the horizon of expectations drawn up by the idea of the forthcoming event may or may not prove useful in the decoding of the event itself. A crucial aspect of audience involvement, then, is the degree to which a performance is accessible through the codes audiences are accustomed to utilizing, the conventions they are used to recognizing, at a theatrical event. Intelligibility and/or success of a particular performance will undoubtedly be determined on this basis.

Whether or not we agree with the implication that decoding is the primary activity of the spectator, or that intelligibility and success are so closely linked to each other and to familiarity with the 'codes' used, the point remains that a performance event, in its signalling of its own position within social, cultural and historical spheres, is performing *something* before it *takes place*, and that the expectations generated from this pre-performance siting enter into an active dialogue with the performance experience itself. In the case of site-specific works, the audience is invited to construct meanings out of the perceived relationship between the performance and its site as it unfolds. It might be that such a relationship is understandable in terms of a binary between celebratory and antagonistic, congruent and conflictual, approaches (and we might locate heritage performance and agit-prop at opposite ends of this scale). Between these points, however, there is space for a range of more complex

relationships to be suggested, explored, tested, evaluated and cemented. In the acting out of these processes, site-specificity makes different calls to its spectators: confirming their relationship to the site, troubling, questioning or subverting it, proposing alternative relationships, and so on.

Extending the metaphor of *siting* that I have introduced here, I want now to outline two somewhat different ways in which the spectator might be sited, this time not as a *real* person in real space and time, but as a concept within the space of this chapter. Firstly, I will draw on the spaces opened up in the earlier chapters of the current thesis, and secondly I will turn to the adjoining spaces of existing theoretical constructions of the spectator.

The spectator in *this* space

I began my explorations of a number of approaches to site by introducing de Certeau's pedestrian/user and his or her activities of tactical manoeuvre and "making do" (de Certeau 1984: 29-42). As the investigation proceeded, this figure as a general concept retreated to the background, only to return to the spotlight in this chapter. But I would suggest that traces of de Certeau's pedestrian rhetorics remain throughout, implied in my own position with regard to the field explored. For in each of the performances given as examples, my role has, primarily, been that of spectator (albeit intertwined with an academic agenda). In one sense, then, this thesis is about spectatorial tactics, suggesting ways in which spectators might make meanings of site-specific performance and the spaces it inhabits. To this end, I have "select[ed] fragments taken from the vast ensembles of production in order to compose new stories with them" (35).

In their analyses of particular spaces and events, the previous explorations have tended to focus on strategies for responding to site-specific performance after it has taken place. Here, however, I am interested in asking what the spectator might take *into* this experience. By looking back to the trajectory marked so far in Part Two, we can suggest three possible, interlinked, answers to this question: rules, memories and rhythms. In a crude classification, these can be understood to relate, respectively, to the social/political, cultural/autobiographical and biological/temporal spheres in

which the spectator might be located. In each of these earlier chapters, the process of negotiation (between sets of rules; between personal, collective and performative versions of spatial memory; between different orders of rhythm) has emerged as significant, and in Chapter Three I posited a model of negotiation in which the spectator actively participates. Viewed from the position of spectator, this model suggests two things: that one's own physical and emotional interactions with – and responses to – the site jostle with those of the performance makers, and that one's understanding of the performance as theatrical event is subject to revisions on the basis of the multiple discourses and experiences generated by the site itself.

Looking back to the spaces opened up by the earlier explorations, we need to revisit those ideas and discursive frameworks that are significant to these audience-inflected processes of interaction and response, understanding and revision. Firstly, we can suggest that the spectator has absorbed (through a variety of pragmatic, cultural and mediatized means) certain *rules* guiding what is considered appropriate or available (and, conversely, inappropriate or prohibited) spatial behaviour in each space encountered. Such rules might touch on issues of movement (direction, speed, proximity, duration), access (*who* is allowed *where*, at what *times* and for what *purposes?*), viewpoint (whose way of seeing the site is offered or accepted as the norm?) or appearance/representation (personal grooming and choice of clothing might be controlled, pointing to ways in which individuals are encouraged to represent themselves in this space). Added to these are the conventions of theatrical viewing, of which different audience groups will have a greater or lesser awareness. And, in the site-specific event, these two sets of rules enter into dialogue with one another – each altering, confirming or denying the force of the other – but always mediated through the presence of the spectator. The potentially creative input of the spectator comes into play when we consider the two terms I've used to develop the notion of spatial rules: the repertoire, and the inner rule. Prior to the performance, spectators may have developed a repertoire of tactics and rules of thumb as a means of operating within a particular site or set of like sites. Similarly, it is open to the spectators as well as to the performers to identify and work with an inner rule or 'punctum' (Barthes 1993) operating spatially that might both feed from and inform their experiences of the site.

Secondly, while the spectator's presence in the theatre building inevitably involves memories (of other performances within this building, of other performances of this text, of changing performance traditions, and of experiences related to the performance thematics), the shift of focus performed through site-specificity means that the architecture or topography of the performance space contains for the audience some of the emotional and mnemonic triggers that would previously have been located in other modes of theatrical expression more subject to the control of the performance: text, body, represented/fictional space and the relationships between these. Moreover, we might distinguish between two orders of spatial memory triggered by the site: memories of *this* place (historical knowledge, childhood experiences, recent everyday or extraordinary activities conducted here, rumour) and memories of *other* places (one place serving to recall another). The concept of *site* (rather than *place*) contains both of these, and becomes saturated with personal and collective associations. In most cases (Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice* would usually, but not always, be an exception here), the performance event includes spectators in the plural, conceived as *an audience* (or, sometimes, audiences), and therefore offers the possibility that the associations experienced by some spectators begin to write themselves into the performance event. In other words, there are instances where the memories of one spectator will inform the viewing experience for another. In response, site-specific performance might develop techniques by which it seeks to channel, limit or invoke these spectatorial memories. The creation (and, perhaps, critique) of a touristic role for the audience, the extent to which gaps in the telling of memory are left between the performance and the site and into which the spectators might insert themselves, the prioritizing – through imagery, text, movement, audience arrangement, and so on – of certain readings of the site over others: these and other techniques establish or control a dialogue on memory between performance and audience.

Thirdly, I would suggest that spectators maintain a connection to both site and performance that might usefully be described as *rhythmic*. By this, I mean that our day-to-day experience of places is fundamentally time-based, organized as a structure of micro and macro changes for which a musicological metaphor is apt. We recognize the disruptive, non-rhythmic (or *arhythmic*) interventions into places *because* we first recognize the network of patterns that operate there. Spatio-temporal

structures that I have attempted to describe as rhythmic include the working day (itself experienced as a complex of smaller-scale patterns: rush hour, production/distribution, lunch break, and so on), a sunset, travelling (the rhythmic qualities depending to a large extent on the mode of transport), and the construction, use and decay of buildings. In many cases it is the site user who physically tracks the changes through a site and whose own bodily rhythms therefore need to be taken into account. In his *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Augusto Boal suggests that “each of us has one or more personal rhythms; our heartbeat, our breath, our walk, our laugh, a rhythm of speech, a rhythm of attention, an eating rhythm, a love-making rhythm, etc” (Boal 1992: 105). On this basis he develops exercises encouraging participants to recognize, interpret and re-stage their own perceptions of each other’s rhythms. Our experience of rhythm (both musical and spatial), we might thus suggest, begins with the body. The multiple and often convoluted time-frames overlapping in a busy London street, a music-filled cathedral, an empty factory, a pub at closing time, are physically felt as they resonate within the modulation of our breathing, our heartbeat, the reverberation of our footsteps. When we come to consider the effect of performance in such spaces, these rhythms are overlaid with a distinctly theatrical structure: gathering-performing-dispersing. Here, too, the audience role is prominent, as it is the spectators that perform the moving dynamics of this model.

19 June 2001.

On leaving the house of Phil Smith, performance-maker and writer, I am handed a ‘goody bag’ recalling those mixed offerings of toys and food that signalled the conclusion of childhood parties. Sure enough, alongside a piece of paper and an audio cassette, there is a papery sweet inside, the kind that is shaped like a flying saucer. I crack into it and let the sherbet ooze onto my tongue. Other spectators of Forest Vague Panic are lingering in Danes Road outside the house – enjoying the cool breeze that seems to come as an antidote to the cramped and sweltering attic from which we have just emerged – and we discuss our experiences of the performance.

It is not until much later, as I pass Stonehenge on my long drive home from Exeter, that I remember the cassette. Reaching again into the small plastic bag I pull out the tape marked ‘Forest Vague Panic: music and short excerpts’ and feel for the cassette player. Traces of that performance, that house, that encounter, do not now seem to document, but rather begin to create a soundtrack to a new site. At the wheel of my car I become a spectator again, waiting to see what will arise from this new performance...

Rules, memories and rhythms: partly literal, partly metaphorical, each of these concepts carries implications for the role that the spectator of site-specific performance might take on. And together these merge with more familiar understandings of spectatorship to build a multi-faceted approach to the perception and experience of spaces that are already being performed before ‘performance’ *takes place*.

Other spaces of spectating

As a final means of siting the spectator, I want to consider how we might locate our spectator – the ‘site-specific’ spectator – within the field mapped out by existing studies of various aspects of spectatorship.

An initial glance at this field reveals a variety of scholarly preoccupations, having to do with, for instance:

- the intellectual activity of the spectator: processes of interpretation, decoding (Bennett 1997) or response (Beckerman 1990);
- a linked set of approaches derived from semiotics (e.g. Elam 1980);
- the direction and character of the gaze, a notion emerging particularly out of scholarship on the cinema (Mulvey 1975);
- the social construction of meaning (e.g. Jauss (in Rice & Waugh 1992));
- the implicit ideological positioning of the spectator (Dolan 1988);
- various understandings of, and arguments as to the efficacy of, audience participation, or audience-performance interaction (e.g. Schechner 1994);
- the construction of a spectatorial text (Kennedy 2001);
- the inhibiting “pressure to articulate a coherent response” (Till 1998: 117).

Even the variety acknowledged here suggests a range of positions (or *points of view*) not only from which to spectate but also from which to write about that process of spectating. A number of studies (Beacham 1991; Davis & Emeljanow 2001; see also Bennett 1997 for an overview of ‘historical approaches’) have pointed to the changing conceptions of what it is to watch performance across different historical moments and in different cultures, thereby reminding us that ‘to spectate’ is actually to do

different things depending on spatial and temporal co-ordinates. The spectator is not a fixed entity but a fluid idea, contextualized in historical, social, political, cultural, class-based and gendered terms. John Berger's seminal book (and television series) on the viewing structures and implications of visual art and mediatized images has provided a much-cited term that usefully and concisely encompasses many of these ideas, enabling us to think about the construction, identification, mobilization and manipulation of plural "ways of seeing" (Berger 1972).

But this emphasis on *seeing* reminds us of the etymological shortcomings of the term 'spectator', which, with its privileging of the idea of *looking* (just as the word 'audience' derives from a Latin root meaning *to hear*), would seem to be insufficient to describe the intricately connected physical, emotional and mental processes that combine to form the spectatorial experience.

Nonetheless, visual perception remains an important part of this experience. Characterized in terms of 'the gaze', it becomes intertwined with issues of gender, sexuality and the politics of representation (see Mulvey 1975). Theoretical consideration of the gaze or, more generally, the processes of seeing in performance addresses questions of control and controllability, of participation and ethics. Different performance practices combine with the spaces in which they are played out to afford different levels of control over the direction and limitation of the spectator's gaze. The debates surrounding the gaze have featured especially prominently in scholarship on the cinema, where arguably the 'eye' of the camera commands the spectatorial eye more authoritatively than in other disciplines. Theatre's proscenium tradition might be said to (re)produce some of cinema's effects in this regard – through the combination of a darkened auditorium, directional lights, and the separation of audience and performers with the concept of the fourth wall – but it cannot eliminate the potential for apparently subordinated elements to hold, momentarily, the spectator's gaze: the performer in the background tableau who shifts *almost* indiscernibly; the scenic detail; the 'spear carrier'. Other theatrical configurations – the black box; environmental theatre; theatre-in-the-round – have variously attempted to adjust the relative levels of control and apparent freedom (to look beyond, around, away). Such notions are inevitably complicated in site-specific performance, where the gaze frequently operates around '360 degrees' (with

spectator, rather than performer, as the central point) and where the site might offer its own focal points (and performance might attempt to work with or against the *pull* of the space in relation to both of these ideas). Perhaps it is the case that these elements exist also in other non-theatre-based practices (street theatre, maybe, or open-air Shakespeare, or a community event in a village hall), but site-specificity differs from these in that, as indicated above, it actively foregrounds the site itself as a generator of performance meanings. Hence, sited practices frequently construct a playful ambiguity around the categories of 'theatre' and 'everyday life', 'fiction' and 'reality', performing in and out of the gaps that are thus created. This ambiguity ties in also to questions of semiotics. For the most part, the stage area of a traditional theatre is cleared after each production, in readiness for the space to be used and objects to be moved in appropriate to the next production. When the performance space also has other uses (as workspace, living space, place of worship, meeting point, memorial site) it becomes less clear which aspects of the environment 'belong' there and which have been introduced for the purposes of the performance. Issues of semiotics and perception are brought together, as the audience's uncertainty over where it is *supposed* to be looking might also be expressed as an uncertainty over different orders of sign: what is it in site-specific performance that *signifies*?

So, while it might be argued that site-specific performance places more emphasis on the physical, bodily experience of its audience than performance in a theatre building, this does not remove the power or significance of the gaze. Spectators know that they are meant to be looking at *something*, that their perception of prepared or rehearsed visual stimuli is deemed important. In the terms of my discussion in Chapter Three, performance's manipulation of the spectatorial gaze relates to a set of 'rules' inherited from the theatrical tradition, with its discourse of raising and lowering the curtain, of framing and spotlighting. It might be that in site-specific performance the materials of these processes – the frames, curtains and spotlights – are *found* materials or just metaphorical presences and that the rules of their application are explored and subverted, but their resonance still has an impact upon the behaviour and expectations of the audience. When Tim Etchells writes of the process of creating Forced Entertainment's *Nights in this City* that "sometimes it seems as if all we have to do is gesture to the windows and ask people to look" (Etchells 2000: 22), he is not only negotiating a path between theatrical colonization and an overly reverent approach to

site, between “writing over” (Kaye 2000) and treading lightly upon that space; he also acknowledges the role of the site-specific performance in framing (both literally and figuratively) the spectator’s encounter with site.

Issues of participation, and consequently of ethics, are addressed here when spectatorial processes of seeing are brought into the context of an active/passive debate. Herbert Blau, for instance, explicitly juxtaposes *seeing* and *participating* when he suggests that the “configuration of performance that purports to be a participatory space wrests from the gaze its constituting power” (1990: 381). Participatory projects, for Blau, attempt “to get rid of the look, dissolving perception into performance” (281).

This introduces a murky area of theatre scholarship. Even defining ‘participation’ in theatrical terms is problematic, let alone attempting to assess its methodological approach and potential effects. Is ancient Greek theatre, or theatre of the English middle ages, participatory? Can it be so in the same way in which the term was applied in the United States and Britain of the 1960s and ‘70s? For it is in this latter period that notions of ‘audience participation’ were located within a specific set of social and political debates clustering around concepts of *agency* and *tradition*, and that performances drawing on participatory techniques were understood to be articulating a critical response to both governmental policies and bourgeois theatrical conventions. In his *Environmental Theater*, originally published in 1973, Richard Schechner includes a chapter entitled ‘Participation’, where he writes that

audience participation expands the field of what a performance is, because *audience participation takes place precisely at the point where the performance breaks down and becomes a social event*. In other words, participation is incompatible with the idea of a self-contained, autonomous, beginning-middle-and-end artwork.

(1994: 40, original emphasis)

Schechner discusses ideas of participation particularly in relation to his work with The Performance Group on *Dionysus in 69*, and his discussion can usefully be compared with Baz Kershaw’s more recent reading of such performances. Kershaw echoes the reservations of many when he suggests that “any effort to create a sense of community through total audience participation in a highly structured performance

event is likely to be shot through with contradictions, yet this was a fairly common ambition among the Western experimental theatre companies in the mid-1960s to early-1970s” (1999: 195). Similarly, Una Chaudhuri, labelling the urge to remove conventional boundaries between performers and audience as “the hyperinclusive theatology of environmental theater” (1995: 9), remarks that

the unnoticed contradiction – between the audience as full and equal participant versus the audience as semiotic element to be manipulated and inscribed within the play’s scenic discourse – underlies much of the anxious debate and response to ... “participatory theatre”.

(24)

She goes on to quote Walter Kerr’s assertion that “the demand that the audience be more active tends to make it more passive” (25). This may well be the case, but let us focus on the word ‘demand’ here to remind ourselves that performance’s discourse of participation not only involves contradictions but also raises questions of ethics. We might, then, glance back to the “meta-theatre” explored in *The Magus*:

‘Mr Conchis, we need hardly any convincing. We’re all happy to admit that we’re a little bit under your spell. Within limits we’re only too delighted to go on with whatever you have planned next.’

‘There is no place for limits in the meta-theatre.’

‘Then you shouldn’t involve ordinary human beings in it.’

(Fowles 1997: 406)

Fowles constructs an ethical problematic with his novel, setting the moral shortcomings of Urfe’s past against the moral questions raised by his treatment at the hands of Conchis. Much of the later criticism of the ‘60s and ‘70s approach to participation argued along the same lines that Urfe does here: an ideal of unlimited involvement must be questioned when it relies upon “ordinary human beings”. Thus, part of the problem that Kershaw identifies in the “immersive participation” of such performances lies in their “not allowing for negotiation of difference within agreed boundaries” and in the risk of exploitation that “cannot be excluded from a zone that aims ultimately to transcend *all* rules” (199). Schechner now concedes that “during the 1960s and 1970s, signals and rules governing audience participation were often vague or ambivalent. This created confusion onstage and off” (2002: 95). Even Schechner’s writing in this example reveals the ideological contradictions of those

earlier performances, as a distinction between on and offstage remains despite the supposed inclusive space shared by performers and spectators alike.

Any theatrical claim for the spectator as participant, then, carries a heavy ethical and historical weight. But as the definitions of participation are re-evaluated, new models might enable us to imagine different participatory forms. We might, for instance, turn to Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, whose metamorphosis of spectator into 'spect-actor' (Boal 1979; 1992) enacts a rather different model of participation from that of environmentalism. The chief distinction here is that the participation happens according to the social or personal agenda of the spect-actor rather than the performers (who, in turn, become facilitators). But it might also be useful to trouble our assumptions of the kinds of *taking part* that can constitute participation. There is a danger in equating the spatial conditions of the audience in proscenium theatre with passivity, and the sharing of performance space (as advocated by Artaud (1993) and Schechner (1994)) with spectatorial agency. Blau articulates such a danger:

there is in this condition of performance, with its recurring crisis of representation, a means of *including* the audience, as auditor or beholder, with a subtlety unavailable to participatory events, which look upon separation as prohibitive or disempowering.

(Blau 1990: 376)

Though Blau retains the 1960s model of 'participatory events', of which he is critical, it seems that his notion of *inclusion* might be deemed a participation of sorts. It is this wider understanding of participation that Susan Bennett references when she posits her extensive study of performance reception as "a testimony to the contemporary emancipation of the spectator" (1997: 213), pointing to the practices of much "non-traditional" theatre that might be said to "restore the participative energies of the theatre spectator" (209).

In order to navigate through the ideas of points of view, seeing and participating, control and ethics that we have so far encountered, it is useful to conceive of the relationship between performance and audience in terms of a contract. This contract might be simple or complex, closed or open, fixed or dynamic, but it seems to require *something* from both parties. Looking is important here; Pearson and Shanks echo Peter Brook as they find, in the figures of 'watchers' and 'watched', two "orders of

participant” that are “fundamental to the contract of performance” (2001: 69). The relationship between spectator as watcher and spectator as participant must, then, be carefully negotiated. The terms of the contract are laid down by a number of different factors – performance style, layout of performance space, theatrical conventions or the borrowed conventions of other arts contexts or social practices, cultural, social and political biases in the audience, horizons of expectation – and may be reworked through the performance event, but they imply some kind of responsibility or investment: the audience agrees to a certain type of looking, of behaviour, of involvement, and the performers or performance-makers, in turn, take a moral responsibility for the safety, though not always comfort, of the spectators.

One type of contract that has received attention from a variety of commentators attempts to cast the audience as witnesses, challenging the construction of the spectator as passive onlooker. The implication when the spectator is figured as witness is that he or she has some kind of duty towards the performance, a duty to engage personally with the work and a duty to remember and to report on, or *testify* to, its significance. The shift from spectator to witness also implies that something ‘real’ is taking place, thereby opening up questions of the social and political status of performance. We might locate a version of theatrical witnessing in Brecht’s famous analysis of a ‘street scene’, whose ‘demonstrator’ of the events surrounding a traffic accident is, significantly, an eyewitness of the accident itself (Brecht 1978). As performer, the demonstrator calls upon his spectators to witness his version of events, and perhaps to consider this in relation to their own witnessing of the original accident. The strategies of epic theatre that Brecht is able to elucidate through this example have to do not only with distinctions between representing (as both the demonstrator and the epic theatre’s actor do) and ‘being’ or embodying (acting tropes of the theatre against which he is reacting), but also with the critical capacity of the spectator. In a somewhat different take on theatre’s social efficacy, Freddie Rokem explores the complex processes of witnessing as a means of analysing how different (and frequently horrific or painful) histories have been performed. For him, the witness is often an actor-witness as opposed to a spectator-witness, a staged character standing in, in some sense, for the spectator. But he is able to mark a shift from spectator to witness when he comes to discuss a site-specific performance dealing with the Shoah – *Arbeit macht frei vom Totland Europa* – that was performed across

a number of sites in Israel (a coach transported the spectators between sites), including a Holocaust museum within a kibbutz.

The actors asked the spectators when was the first time we had heard about the Shoah and if we had any direct personal relationship to it. I experienced this section of the performance as a moment of embarrassment, a kind of transgression: from primarily having been a passive participant in the guided tour of the museum, once in a while asked general questions, I was now asked to open up experiences which were private. In a way each one of us was asked to become a witness, not just a spectator.

(Rokem 2000: 69-70)

We can trace the image of witness through other, quite different, performance modes. Indeed, Tim Etchells performs a tracing of this kind as he contemplates the kinds of contemporary performance that “struggle to produce witnesses rather than spectators” (1999: 18), citing the artists Ron Athey, Stelarc, Blast Theory, Goat Island and Bobby Baker, along with his own work with Forced Entertainment. Asserting that “to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one’s own place in them” (17), Etchells finds implications of witnessing in these artists’ use of excess, of audience arrangement, of specific physical vocabularies, and of personally charged spaces.

The audience/witness distinction remains vital and provocative since it reminds us to ask questions about where art matters and where it leaves its mark – in the real world or in some fictional one – and on whom it leaves its burden.

(18)

In her foreword to Etchells’s book, Peggy Phelan focuses particularly on the concept of witnessing, and suggests that, though drawing on psychoanalysis and political ethics for this notion, theatre might find its own methods and understandings of witnessing that have to do with more complex (and, perhaps, more enjoyable) forces than simply “trauma, accident, and death” (1999: 13). Developing this idea, it might be that site-specific theatre discovers its own particular brand of witnessing. So what does it mean to be a spectator who is also a witness? How and in what ways might site-specific performance be said to produce witnesses?

When Jan Cohen-Cruz uses the category of ‘witness’ to identify a number of radical street performances, she finds that “the site of such performance usually relates

directly to the event being scrutinized” (1998: 5). So space and its performative exploration or manipulation, as Tim Etchells also indicates, seem to engender a certain kind of witnessing, a certain knowledge (and questioning?) of one’s own presence *here*, in this space, at this time. The term ‘witness’ also, we might note, occupies the same discourse as Pearson and Shanks’s notion of the ‘scene of crime’, that space in which “everything is potentially important” (2001: 59), which begins to demand a “poetics of absence” (60) and which offers new ways of dealing with the aftermath of performance through documentation. A further discourse, emerging from the work of Brith Gof, is significant here: Clifford McLucas’s model of the host, the ghost and the witness (see my interview with McLucas – appendix three), where the ‘host’ refers to the space or spaces of performance, the ghost is the performative actions that ‘haunt’ the site for a short while and through which the site can clearly be seen, and the audience becomes the witness. This model assigns an important role to the spectator of site-specific performance, and asserts that, because that elusive thing called *the work* is a “hybrid of all three” elements, site-specificity is able to “rewrite the contract” between performers and audience.

Let us begin to outline, then, the potential features of a site-specific performance/spectator contract, mobilizing the terms of the various scholarly debates we have encountered. Firstly, I suggested above that site-specificity produces its own ‘ways of seeing’, offering its spectators a surfeit of visual stimuli – which may or may not be read as meaningful images – and therefore creating what we might term a semiotic excess. It is possible, however, that this *excess* might lead to a relaxation of the audience activity of decoding rather than placing renewed pressure on it; such a relaxation, I want to suggest, would be brought about through a sense of *eventness*.

Chapter Two’s survey reports that the notion of the event is particularly significant to site-specific performance (though not, of course, restricted to this field). Here the use of this term is intended to denote a ‘whole’ experience for the audience (combining the categories of “pre-spectacle, the spectacle itself, and post-spectacle” that Susan Bennett delineates (1997: 206)). That is, something is being *performed* from the moment the spectator arrives, or even begins his or her journey; in performance beyond the theatre the dimming of the lights and the opening of the curtain no longer exist as signifiers for the start of the performance ‘proper’. In my list of academic

preoccupations above, I pointed to Nicholas Till's discussion of the "pressure to articulate a coherent response" that "inhibits most spectators" (1998: 117); this is that pressure to find not just *any* meaning but 'the right meaning'. Because of the way in which the notion of the event operates within a popular discourse, it might therefore be said to remove the *burden of meaning* from the spectator. It references the carnival, the music gig, the pedestrian journey – none of which require interpretation in quite the same way that the theatre would seem to demand.

Continuing with the implications of the event for the performance-audience contract, it might be argued that spectators *write themselves into* an event in a way that they do not do in response to a piece of theatre. I am borrowing here from Dennis Kennedy's comparison of spectatorship in sports and the theatre, where he concludes that "the chief distinction of sports is the freedom fans assume to create, in a public forum and communally, a new text out of their spectation, separate from the text of the game or the meanings assigned to it by the media or official agencies" (2001: 283). There are echoes in this statement of Schechner, who has recently suggested that "what is experimental in the performing arts is commonplace in sports, pop-music concerts, and religious services. Here the partakers are very powerful event-shapers" (2002: 223). Kennedy delineates three aspects of the "playful freedom" he claims for the sports spectator: the freedom to "negotiate a relationship to other unknown spectators", to "condemn the performance's outcome and reject the manner of play", and to "vary or alter the purpose" of his or her presence (2001: 278-9). Commenting on this last point, Kennedy observes that

under the rigours of theatre architecture and the modernist revisions to the actor-audience association, theatre spectators have been deprived of much of the privilege to write themselves into the performance event

(279)

Though I would not want to argue that these distinctions between theatre and sport are erased by site-specific performance, the terms in which Kennedy couches his discussion are useful in the current context. For the removal of the theatre building from the performance-audience encounter seems to invite the spectator to create a new text out of his or her relationship to (activity within/knowledge of) the space of performance and, as a result, out of the relationship forged with other spectators.

Thus, Kennedy's notion of the spectatorial text has direct links with the model of negotiation that I have been proposing, and also with the issues of participation encountered above. In spaces that are not already *over-determined* in the manner of the theatre building (although they may well be over-determined in other notable ways), I have suggested that the spectator is an active participant in the negotiation of a set of rules for the performance event. That is, the nature of site-specificity may require participation of a different kind than we have been used to. It may, in fact, be able to find ways of creating a participatory performance environment without invoking "colonisation" or "exploitation", that "theatrical pathology" that for Baz Kershaw can play "fast and loose with the virus of brute oppression" (1999: 199). We might suggest that, in performance that asserts the primacy of the space, the traditional hierarchies are altered somewhat because both performers and spectators are participants in the space. Cathy Turner articulates this idea in terms of the freedom and equality that a joint exploration of space might effect:

Site-specific performance is freer to renegotiate relationships with audiences than performance within traditional spaces: it becomes easier to attain a sense of equality between performers and audience, which is necessary, if audience members are to freely participate. Site-specific performance also allows a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction: between the expertise of the storyteller in creating a fiction and the actual experience and empirical judgement of the audience. I'm interested in a theatre where the fiction is the reality, which can be inhabited and altered by the audience. The real site is fictionalised, made metaphoric, but remains physically present and capable of other fictions, other metaphors, other occupations.

(Turner 2000: 39-40)

If we can define the 'thing' in which spectators are asked to participate as a performative exploration of space, it is worth noting that their participation might alter the results of the exploration. This is because their presence is understood not only as it relates to the performance but also as it relates to the site, and this introduces the possibility of feelings of spectatorial ownership of site. Developing his discussion of site-specificity out of architectural theory and 1960s minimalist art experiments, Nick Kaye (2000) describes an ambiguous spectatorial position, part viewer and part participant, arising out of the works' questioning and testing of boundaries between 'real' and 'virtual' spaces. The site-specific contract, it seems,

locates the spectator simultaneously within and outside of the work, as co-inhabitant of the space(s) of performance and as detached viewer of a theatrical spectacle.

We are moving again toward an understanding of the site-specific spectatorial role as fundamentally multiple. Meshing this notion of a fluid and ambiguous contract with the idea of the spectator's contribution to spatial rules, memories and rhythms, we are reminded of the complexity of site-specificity's creation of the audience role. The conditions of participation are not controlled exclusively by the performance: very often, in fact, the spectator is already a participant in the space before the performance event occurs.

14 September 2001.

First on my Latvian itinerary is the Daugavgriva Fortress. Formerly a military site, it is now little more than a crumbling wall offering a number of different performance levels. Within this space, I am constructed as tourist before the performance begins. Here, a mystery play – I Played, I Danced – is presented by the Lithuanian group Miraklis. The performance is visually and aurally stunning, with its use of colourful puppets and masks, fireworks, dance, and a haunting new musical score. Baltic myth and music are commodified for me in an evocative setting; I begin to feel slightly uncomfortable in this touristic experience – taking pleasure in a beautifully packaged product whose words and cultural significance I can't understand. Always attracted to non-theatre spaces, the group asserts that "each performance fits organically into the surrounding environment, its relief and atmosphere". But I'm not sure that an 'organic fit' is what I'm seeking in my encounters with site-specific performance. Or whether in fact my own organism as spectator who does not fit, who is out of place, interrupts the organic fit sought by the performance.

I have attempted to come at the question of siting the spectator from three different angles, allowing us to explore:

1. the means by which an audience is located prior to attending a site-specific performance,
2. the implications for the spectator of the tools built in the earlier parts of the current thesis, and
3. the legacy of wider debates in the field of spectatorship,

ending with a re-evaluation of what a performance/audience contract might mean in the current study. Emerging from these interconnected contexts, this chapter

concludes with my proposals for configuring a useful understanding of the role and experience of the spectator in site-specific performance.

Let us recall the “meta-theatre” and the yellow cows. The points of departure offered at the beginning of this chapter make two suggestions in particular for non-theatre-based performance to which I would like to return: that site-specific performance is experienced through shifting frames that simultaneously set it off from and locate it within the everyday, and that the spectator in such instances occupies a number of (often overlapping) roles. I want to address these linked ideas by gesturing towards two characteristics of the site-specific spectator: self-reflexivity and hybridity.

Self-reflexivity

Here, I am primarily interested in that mode of site-specific practice that locates itself within a space *as it is being used* for other, everyday or extraordinary, purposes. Mike Pearson in Hibaldstow, Kate Lawrence and Janine Creaye in the Electric Theatre foyer and along the river Wey, Janet Cardiff in the East End of London, the Bristol Old Vic at the city docks, together with any number of examples referred to in the survey in Chapter Two: these diverse events that we have visited through our exploration all occupy their sites at the same time as other users. In doing so, they each create a *doubled audience*: consisting of a ‘knowing’ audience and an ‘accidental’ audience. One set knowingly constructs itself as an audience and consciously acts out the theatrical processes of gathering and dispersing (travelling to this place at a set time on a set date precisely to see a performance), while the other set happens to be in the space for a reason other than the performance event and, depending largely on the type of performance, may or may not begin to see the performative frames. The relationship created between this latter group and the combined frame of performance and knowing audience is complex: the group actively inscribes itself within the site while, perhaps unknowingly, drawing attention to the theatrical status of the first group. Depending on the particular performance context, the second group might be read by the first as being a part of the performance (causing the spectators to “suspect the performativity” (Smith 2001: 15) of others in the site). Alternatively, its metaphorical distance from the performance might be apparent, opening up the gap between site and event.

When I suggested, in my reading of *Up the Feeder, Down the 'Mouth and Back Again* in Chapter Five, that the opening of the large museum doors *performs the very act of spectating*, I hinted at the self-reflexive nature of the spectatorial role in these instances. At the point where the spectator becomes aware of being watched by others outside of the performance frame, he or she begins to perform the act of spectating, being conscious of what it means to be part of the audience of that particular event.

Self-reflexivity occurs, then, at the point where “the spectator’s gaze is subject to a deflection or reversal” (Kaye 2000: 10) and the result of this movement varies.

- Spectators might be moved to a critical assessment of their (perhaps privileged) position in the site. This may well be the case in practices that invite their audience to assume the role of tourists.
- The performance might be read as being in some way meta-theatrical, revealing (and thus critiquing) the bonds and connections upon which theatre relies.
- Spectators might, individually or as groups, begin to negotiate new relationships with one another, changing the character of their spectatorship (cf. Kennedy 2001).
- An exchange or network of live audience feedback might begin to operate within the doubled audience, creating the opportunity not only for two sets of audience to generate different kinds of feedback on the performance, but also for one set of audience to receive feedback from the other on its performance as ‘audience’ within the space.

Though it is the presence of the second, accidental, component of the doubled audience that foregrounds the self-reflexive stance, my feeling is that it exists to some extent in all site-specific performance. As Simon Persighetti has argued, “in site-specific work the artifice of acting is exposed when the site reminds the audience of their own presence in a particular time and space. It suggests a different approach to performance” (2000: 9). The audience is already *written in* to the “architectural solidity” (Read 1993: 4) of the theatre building – a permanent part of that space has been built and arranged for the sole purpose of watching a theatrical performance –

and consequently its role in such sites is unremarkable, taken for granted. In other, non-performance, spaces the audience has to negotiate a role for itself, thus being made acutely aware of the act of spectating *here*, in this site. Some non-theatre spaces, we might add, have the potential for spectating built into them (places of worship, sports venues, auction houses, debating chambers, strip clubs, airport viewing lounges, university lecture rooms, cinemas, law courts), but the various modes of spectating implied in these sites differ from theatrical spectatorship in terms of agency, purpose, intellectual activity, physical positioning and, of course, expectation of what is to be seen. These sites in themselves construct the spectators in particular ways, assigning them new roles: as congregation, perhaps, or sports fans, students or citizens.

18 June 2002.

Emerging into a brightly lit room from a maze of darkened corridors at the Battersea Arts Centre, I am handed a glass of wine and offered a slice of wedding cake. The other spectators, whom I had temporarily lost in my personal journey through the physical spaces of the site (of BAC) and the psychological spaces of the text (of Hamlet), are gathering here, amid a sense of mixed amusement, anticipation and gentle unease at the role we are now being asked to play. In dreamthinkspeak's Who Goes There?, we are wedding guests and citizens, eavesdroppers and knowing spectators. But this is a response to the fictional world of Hamlet rather than the specificity of the site. It's not quite what I mean by hybrid identities.

Hybridity

In his book *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production*, Paul du Gay coins the term *hybrid work identities* to refer to “the ways in which employees in contemporary service work are encouraged to take on the role of both worker and customer in the workplace” (1997: 287). I want to borrow this notion to suggest a way in to looking at identity positions involved in site-specific performance. A number of place-related roles, I’m suggesting, may be blurred into a *hybrid identity* assumed by one person or group of people.

Jauss’s model of the horizon of expectations suggests that the spectator might already be said to be hybrid – occupying a number of roles simultaneously – in the theatre building, as his or her position in a nexus of social, cultural and political contexts is

brought to bear on the experience. But I want to propose, and have begun to do so already in this chapter, that the hybrid identity is a particularly significant concept in site-specific performance.

For Ong, “the writer’s audience is always a fiction. The writer must set up a role in which absent and often unknown readers can cast themselves”. He goes on to suggest that “the way in which readers are fictionalized is the underside of literary history, of which the topside is the history of genres and the handling of character and plot” (Ong 1982: 102-3). Performance, too, imagines a role for its spectators, but it then involves a live encounter in which this role can be negotiated. Ong’s terms might be applied not only to the ways in which theatre fictionalizes its audience but also to space, which fictionalizes its inhabitants and visitors. Experience of space is always mediated (or performed) through a number of different factors that create this fictionalizing effect. These factors could be of tourism, commerce, ecology, politics or art and they suggest not only how a site is to be used but how it is to be remembered. So, while the spectator of any performance is fictionalized by that performance, the spectator of site-specific performance is fictionalized by both performance and site and is therefore required to take on a hybrid identity. Because of the liveness of the event, the nature of this hybridity may change as a result of the spectator’s interaction with space and performance.

So, what role⁵ is the spectator asked to play in site-specific performance? Susan Bennett suggests that “in the circumstance of the theatre visit, the spectator takes on his/her role(s) before the performance *per se* begins” (1997: 125). This is also true of the spectator who plans to see a site-specific performance. But in getting to and moving within a non-theatre space, the same spectator may already have chosen or been asked to occupy a number of other, place-related roles. And these will not simply cease to operate, or to hold significance, when the performance itself begins. The everyday life of the spectator is not suspended *in the same way* in site-specific work as it is in the theatre building, though the complex performance frames that are established in place of the proscenium arch still often signal some form of extraordinary state. Therefore, the spectator oscillates between daily and extra-daily modes of being, of seeing and of moving.

Before we come to consider the possible results of the altered dynamic of the spectatorial role, let me give a provocation, listing some potential identities that might be brought together by the performance event to form a hybrid role. In different instances, then, the spectator might be figured as:

curator	viewer	tourist	inhabitant
(time-) traveller	visitor	trespasser	intruder
guest	explorer	colonizer	pilgrim
pedestrian	(window-) shopper	passer-by	flâneur
rambler	worker	commuter	child
consumer	customer	creator	day-dreamer
ecologist	surveyor	archaeologist	(psycho)geographer
anthropologist	cartographer	orienteer	detective

(the) other

The spectator here is implicated in a variety of ways, and not only in the more familiar formulations that would claim him or her as witness, participant or performer. These roles reference a number of different social spheres and are differently politically and ideologically inscribed. They are variously historicized, hierarchized and gendered. The spectator faces a choice regarding the extent to which he or she might embrace any one of the roles offered. There is the possibility, also, that the spectator may simultaneously be offered contradictory roles. And other factors combine to shift the emphasis across a range of performance conditions. More or less control of the availability of any of these roles may lie with the performance or with the site: it might be that the performance cultivates one or other and offers these to its spectators, or that the site itself determines the possibilities. The level of choice exercised by the spectator in this process will, of course, vary. Different roles will hold differing potential to affect the performance. And it is not only that the spectator might be a performer, but also that the performer might become a spectator. Site-specificity might be the condition under which the performer is able to join with the spectator in responding to or witnessing the space.

Subject: thanks for your email

Date: Sun, 30 Sep 2001 12:52:28 +0100

From: Phil Smith

To: Fiona Wilkie

Fiona,

Given the potential usefulness of the concept of the "possessed" site, is there a connection between the "spectatorial" and the "spectral" or is this idle wordplay? How present is a spectator? How close is a performance to a séance? Is "spectre" part of the 'hybrid identity' of the spectator?

With very best wishes,

Phil⁶

The relative significance assigned to any one role is closely tied to the spectator's prior relationship to both site and performance. If the site is intrinsically a peopled space (or set of linked spaces), it might therefore already include an audience. Thus we can begin to make a distinction between practices in which the audience is allied with the site and those that, rather, ally the audience to the performative intervention into that site. In 1996, Cornford and Cross's installation *Camelot* created its audience out of the inhabitants (or users) of the public space of its Stoke-on-Trent site, in the process, as Adrian Kear has argued, necessitating "a reorganisation of the public's pedestrian occupation of the space" and requiring that its "witnesses" begin to "change the pattern of their daily lives" (Kear 2001). Here, the 'spectators' are *of the site* and the intervention performed by the installation reveals and challenges their spatial behaviour and spatial roles at the same time as it carries out these same functions with regard to the space.

In part, it is the nature of the available hybrid identity in any one instance that sets the parameters between which the spectator is able to negotiate. A simple example of this can be seen in the different levels of audience engagement with an ad hoc street performance. The ring of spectators around the central focus of such a performance might be analysed in terms of a continuum between the roles of spectator and passer-by, with the depth within the crowd and the physical position *vis a vis* the performance as indicators of the spectatorial choices made.⁷ Thus, the person at the front of the crowd, near the centre of this ring, who is sitting cross-legged on the ground has made some kind of proximal commitment to becoming a spectator, and has even adopted the theatrical convention of sitting at a performance. Conversely,

the person at the outside edge of the crowd who peers over the rows of heads to see what is going on but only momentarily changes the speed and not the direction of his or her movement is choosing to be aligned with the role of passer-by, shopper or pedestrian.

The notion of the hybrid identity enables us to explore both individual and collective responses to performance and the possibility of these occurring simultaneously. Above all, it points to site-specific spectatorship as an imaginative experience, which cannot be wholly contained by either the space or the performance. As Cathy Turner finds,

the audience might be invited to experience and imagine beyond the confines of the performance, beyond the history of the site, slipping through the gaps in the performance to discover new narratives and experiences.

(Turner 2000: 27)

New narratives are created out of the spectator's occupation of multiple and dynamic roles, and these in turn work to shape the site-specific performance experience, impacting upon the negotiation of spatial 'meanings' in performance.

Notes:

¹ A situationist technique, outlined by Guy Debord in his 1956 'The Theory of the Derive' (see Kaye 2000: 117-8).

² From an email sent to me by Cathy Turner of Wrights & Sites, after reading a draft of Chapter Two's survey results.

³ I am thinking here of those allied to *The Guardian* and its sister paper, *The Observer*. Certainly at present these are the main forums in Britain for popular national response to site-specific performance.

⁴ Bernard Beckerman, in his study of the relationship between performer, audience and act in *Theatrical Presentation*, concentrates on these first two categories of focus, arguing that "audience response is a direct consequence of engagement with performing structures and content as they alter, challenge and confirm our attitudes" (1990: 87).

⁵ Chaudhuri argues for a critical relationship between space and spectatorial role when she suggests that the theatre lobby "serves to prepare the spectators to enter the auditorium and assume their roles as 'onlookers'" (1995: 46). See also Landy (1993) for a much more developed understanding of the concept of 'role' as a complex system. Landy's is primarily a psychological approach, which he largely applies to therapeutic contexts, but he provides a useful survey of the shifting understanding of 'role' across a range of academic, cultural and social fields and sets up productive distinctions between various relationships of 'self' and 'role' (taking a role, receiving, playing, and so on).

⁶ From an email sent to me by Phil Smith of Wrights & Sites, after reading a draft of Chapter Four.

⁷ Richard Schechner creates a diagrammatic representation of 'eruptions' using a similar approach, characterizing the centre as 'hot' and the rim as 'cool' (1988: 158).

Afterword: Negotiating Meanings

*As you walk, think about:
your strongest memories of travelling
the direction you'd have to walk in to get home*

...
Find a place to sit and rest ... for a minute or two.
(*Wrights & Sites*, An Exeter Mis-Guide)

On walking and not walking

At this stage of the process, it is the journeys I remember most. The journeys of some of the performances I have written about, yes (walking in a group in Hibaldstow led by Mike Pearson, in one of a number of small groups enacting a pilgrimage to St Catherine's Chapel, and alone in east London with the voice of Janet Cardiff), but other journeys too: the getting to, from and between those sites of performance that are not designated theatre sites (long car trips, late-night tubes, map-led pedestrian navigations), my excursions to Wales, London and Yorkshire – discursively linked in the dialogue boxes of Chapter Two – to interview three practitioners, walking the field trail at Bore Place, and the conceptual journey that takes us from 'site(s) and specificity' to 'negotiating meanings'. At the same time I recall marks of the absence of journeys, those journeys resolutely not taken: in the *York Millennium Mystery Plays*, for instance, or those remembered and mourned in *Up the Feeder, Down the Mouth and Back Again*.

All of which leads me to consider another journey: that required of the spectator/walker of Graeme Miller's *Linked* project (2003). Even before the project had *taken place* it had already begun to leave traces, in written documents, photographs, Internet descriptions (see www.artsadmin.co.uk) and live presentations (Miller's illustrated talk at the CIVICCentre symposium, London, April 2003, www.civiccentre.org). Miller – a British theatre and sound artist – describes his work as cartography (2000: 112), but his is a peculiar kind of cartographic practice that attends to practices of composition as well as of surveying and to the close-up as well as the overview: it is drawn lightly, invites multiple authorship, and charts processes

of erasure. *Linked*, a project mounted in conjunction with the Museum of London, is a sound map of the 300 houses in east London (including Miller's own) that were demolished to make way for the M11 link road. Walkers tune in, via headphones, to a set of narratives recorded with ex-residents and transmitted from various points along the route. In discussing the work at the CIVICCentre symposium, Graeme Miller describes the link road as a space resistant to narrative, a space in which stories don't seem to hang (it is worth noting, then, that a series of small exhibitions to accompany the installation will be mounted in spaces – that is, libraries and museums – with already very clear models of storytelling). Miller's reference to the apparent anti-narrativity of a site usefully inverts a question that is frequently at the heart of site-specificity: what stories does this site tell? Enquiring, rather, into those stories that the site does *not* tell – or asking whether, in fact, any resistance to narrative tells a story in itself – seems a suitable project for site-specific performance at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

I want to draw my own links here, moving from the projects of linking created by both Miller and the urban planners to whom he responds to the contemporary conditions of site-specificity. This will involve thinking about the dialectics of movement and stillness and the negotiation between these positions. If the space of the M11 link road is indeed resistant to narrative, it seems that what it also resists is a particular form of movement (walking) in favour of its own (driving). The walker, in a variety of guises, has been a privileged figure of both modernist and postmodernist critical discourse (see Pearson & Shanks 2001: 148-50), even as it seems that built environments work more and more against this type of spatial negotiation. Phil Smith (2003), constructing "an autobiographical walking of everything else" as a rhetorical move against "criticism that can be applied to everything but itself", finds that:

the narrativity of walking ... is disrupted – at least for most adults in relatively, if unequally prosperous economies, by that utopianism of the past: nostalgia. The walker is in defiance of the petroleum imperative. The refusal to drive or be driven is a wilful, arrogant, romantic, backward-glancing nod to the past.

In meditating on walking and not walking, it is worth noting that this latter category means not just standing (or sitting) still, but also other forms of movement, including

driving and taking public transport: two forms that themselves enact very different ideological approaches to the spaces they traverse. If walking performs a version of nostalgia, the same might be argued for the bus journey, for example. This is not a reason to avoid exploring these forms: in my discussion of *Bubbling Tom* in Chapter Four, for example, I pointed to ways in which performance might fruitfully engage with nostalgia, acknowledging its problematics while at the same time recognizing and enjoying its emotional resonances. Moreover, I would argue that if the walk of Graeme Miller's *Linked* performs nostalgia it simultaneously performs a subtle subversion of the patterns of movement that seem to be required by the newly build site: after all, if walking "affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it 'speaks'" (de Certeau 1984: 99), might it not also carry out these functions in relation to those trajectories it intersects or meets or that move alongside it?

"WALKS OF CHANCE

WALKS CARRYING A BAG OF ELEVEN PEBBLES WITH A WORD WRITTEN ON EACH

UP DOWN END FAST SLOW NORTH SOUTH EAST WEST STRAIGHT MEANDERING

EACH WALK IS REALISED BY OBSERVING THIS SYSTEM:
THE PEBBLES ARE DRAWN AT RANDOM OUT OF THE BAG ONE BY ONE AT INDETERMINATE INTERVALS
EACH PEBBLE IS RETURNED TO THE BAG WHILE THE WALK PROCEEDS BY FOLLOWING THE WORD ON
THAT PEBBLE

THIS PROCEDURE IS REPEATED FROM PEBBLE TO PEBBLE UNTIL THE END PEBBLE IS DRAWN

EAST FAST UP SOUTH UP STRAIGHT SOUTH MEANDERING NORTH WEST NORTH UP FAST END

EAST UP END

UP SLOW STRAIGHT STRAIGHT MEANDERING SOUTH FAST END

FAST STRAIGHT SOUTH DOWN SLOW SOUTH STRAIGHT STRAIGHT NORTH EAST DOWN WEST SOUTH
END

DOWN WEST MEANDERING UP STRAIGHT MEANDERING SLOW FAST DOWN SOUTH DOWN SLOW END

FAST MEANDERING UP SLOW NORTH END

DARTMOOR ENGLAND 1998"

(Richard Long, *Walking the Line*)

Miller's project reminds us that walking is an alternative to spatial positions other than the bird's-eye view, the panoptic vantage point of the surveyor, and this, in turn, serves to complicate our theorization of spatial rhetorics. The London Underground, for example, invites an inherently different way of experiencing the city than walking. What, then, is the relationship between the tube traveller and the urban environment? Similarly, might the urban practice of driving involve improvisations comparable to

those of de Certeau's pedestrian, or can it only reinforce dominant patterns of movement within the city? And, with the privileging of the urban in these critical frameworks, we might ask whether it is possible to identify city-specific and rural-specific pedestrian speech acts; in other words, what happens when de Certeau's walker moves to a space other than the city?

Site-specific performance has been a means of addressing these questions, its own transience making for answers that are provisional and context-dependent, located and yet on the move. The analyses of the preceding chapters reveal something of a recurring theme, enacted in the intersecting relationships between walking and not-walking, movement and stillness, the local and the global, mobilization and spatial anchoring. This theme finds a variety of manifestations here:

- in the genealogy of site-specific *art* outlined in the Introduction (and drawn particularly from the observations of Miwon Kwon (2002));
- in Chapter One's conceptual movements between types of space;
- in the tensions raised by issues of touring, relocating and reworking among practitioners surveyed for Chapter Two;
- in my own negotiation of a set of positions from which to navigate Bore Place (Chapter Three);
- in the notion of the journey reflected differently in Chapter Four's two case studies (*Bubbling Tom* engages actively with a journey format while the production of the *York Millennium Mystery Plays* involves a marked and significant move away from such a format);
- in Chapter Five's investigation of sites in temporal terms, identifying continuities and discontinuities, the *rhythms* of spatial movement and stillness;
- in the multiple positions implying different kinds of movement or fixedness (perhaps pedestrian and surveyor, pilgrim and window-shopper or cartographer and orienteer) that Chapter Six argues might be occupied by the spectator of site-specific performance.

These connected themes explored and expanded in this thesis find notable resonances elsewhere. Miwon Kwon ends her study of site-specific art by mediating between the apparently polar approaches to site that have developed in the work: between the

groundedness exemplified in Richard Serra's statement that "to move the work is to destroy the work" (cited in Kaye 2000: 2) and the nomadic paradigm of a seemingly undifferentiated 'one place after another'. More helpful than this polarization is Kwon's assertion that "we need to be able to think the range of the seeming contradictions and our contradictory desires for them together" (2002: 166). William Fiennes recent work of travel writing, *The Snow Geese*, does just that. While Bruce Chatwin, though interested in documenting the means by which ties between people and place are manifested, spent most of his career enquiring into the seductions of nomadism, Fiennes presents a more nuanced exploration of the pull between restlessness and the need to return. Taking the migratory patterns of birds as both a structural model for his journey and a metaphorical model for the instinctual, meteorological and cosmological factors of our contradictory relationships to places, he reflects on the significance of nostalgia in this context, drawing our attention to the term's beginnings as the medical condition of homesickness. Here we find echoes of Una Chaudhuri's mapping of 'the geography of modern drama' (1995), which takes as its prominent ley lines the discourse of home and the rhetoric of the (failed) homecoming. The complexity of the relationship between travelling and returning home, between spaces of the new and spaces of the familiar, is revealed in Fiennes' prescription for himself: "to turn my nostalgia inside-out. ... You had to be homesick for somewhere you had not yet seen, nostalgic for things that had not yet happened" (2002: 204).

The dialectics of a variety of forms of spatial movement and positions of located stillness emerges from this study not as a problem to be solved but as a potent field of ideas within which we might situate our responses to the nature of site-specificity. Such an understanding renders the urge to claim a 'true' site-specific practice – the one that resides in one particular, physical place, asserting the 'specific' and indivisible relationship between performance and space, or the one that is itinerant, traversing physical, virtual and metaphorical spaces in its testing of the meanings of 'site' – redundant, as both models (and the many others that occupy positions between them) contribute usefully to debates regarding how we conceive of, imagine and communicate our interactions with spaces. Keeping this in mind, I want to take a step back, reorienting the thesis in the light of some of the ideas of the earlier chapters

before concluding with some comments about the role of negotiation as a tool for addressing the creation of meanings in the field I have sketched out here.

Reorientation

Towards the beginning of the thesis I argued for the significance of orientation in creating space for the positioning of, and reflection upon, a range of spatial concepts and located practices. I want to return to that metaphor here, suggesting that by revisiting some of the terms and ideas of the present study we might reorient ourselves within its discursive structure. This, therefore, would seem to open the space for a new series of explorations.

In my introduction to this thesis I posited the following as useful questions: what do we mean by 'site'? and how, in this context, is 'specificity' to be conceived of? Since then, the enquiry has expanded beyond attempts to define the site-specific into other types of question. What do site-specific practices have to say about space and our relationships to it? What do they have to say about theatre? What strategies and tactics do these practices use? And how might we find suitable critical approaches for writing about them? In order to make any specific claims about the nature of the spatial engagement from which site-specificity begins, we must ask what exactly of that place is being engaged with. Of course, a variety of answers might be, and indeed have been, suggested by the practices themselves. It is in direct response to both site-specific performance practices and the wealth of critical and lyrical writing on issues of place and space that this thesis has suggested a critical framework through excursions into theoretical spaces, maps of the spaces of practice, and explorations of rules, memory, rhythms and spectatorship. These linked approaches allow us to open up metaphorical spaces surrounding the literal spaces of performance and enable us to formulate pertinent questions that might reveal something of the nature of site-specificity in performance. Together they point to a multi-layered understanding of the dynamic relationships explored, usefully complicating the ways in which site-specificity might both describe itself and be described.

Chapter One's excursions take as their starting points a number of complex shifts between geographical, theatrical and theoretical spaces. In pursuit of the 'site' of

performance, they raise a series of questions: of the critical significance of terminology and metaphor, of historically specific discourses of space, and of the politics of imagining spaces as empty or full. Further excursions are suggested here. Via, perhaps, Ong's work on the relationship between orality and literacy (1982), we might move further into textual sites and the philosophies of space that these reveal. Another excursion might, as an alternative to Brook (1996), investigate a more complex dialogue between our use of actual, rather than generic, theatre spaces and other sites of performance.

The maps of Chapter Two – though still plural and layered – perform a function that the excursions cannot. They enable the *representation* of a wide range of contemporary British performance practices and mark productive comparisons between the relative scale, shape and position of these practices. There is a value, I suggest, in charting this space, and privileging here the kinds of knowledge that are only available to those *in the field*. But mapping, as Pile and Thrift point out, might also be understood as “wayfinding” (1995: 1) – a function that Chapter Two serves by placing insistent flags in its maps to alert us to key issues to be taken up in the explorations. These include the politics and economics of choosing or ‘finding’ performance sites, the creative possibilities of tentative and shifting labels for the work, and the position of site-specificity at the intersection of various non-arts-based territories (examples are community discourse, social organization, tourism, celebration and leisure).

Having pointed toward the intriguing spaces opened up the slippage between geographical and metaphorical uses of spatial terminology (Chapter One), we might suggest that Chapter Three pursues an extended form of wordplay, centred on the denotations and connotations of the word ‘rule’. The subtle differences enacted by the move from ‘*a* rule’ to ‘*the* rules’ and then to the verb ‘to rule’ via, perhaps, ‘rule of thumb’, ‘rules of the game’ and the action that is taken ‘as a rule’, indicate something of the potential richness of the term for thinking about spatial behaviour. This involves attending to the personal nature of behavioural choices, the means by which spatial behaviour is governed, the effects it has and its ethical and political implications. It is worth remembering that to rule is not only the action taken by the controller of a site but also the preparatory action required of the cartographer, who

draws a grid as a means of ordering the complex information he or she wishes to record. Rules, then, have to do with the organization of space and of behaviour in space on a number of levels, which I have attempted to address through the concepts of the *repertoire* and the *inner rule*. This is complicated further when we consider that performance carries its own rules, involving “the expectation that we are willing “to play the game” on which all aesthetic perception is based” (States 1996: 13). Therefore, I have argued that site-specificity is conditioned by the rules, conventions and behavioural assumptions of three parties: the space(s), the performance, and the audience.

A somewhat different approach is taken in Chapter Four, in which I analyse two recent performances that engage with issues of memory and space in striking ways. The metaphor of weaving is, for me, a valuable one here, allowing me to mediate between the performances at the same time as offering a way of characterizing the role of the performance makers. In the process, memory itself, particularly as it is performed, becomes interwoven with other concepts: tourism and history (and the representation of these), commemoration, perceptions of the country and the city, processes of journeying and homecoming (recalling the discussion with which I opened the present chapter), and temporality. It is with regard to this last concept that the chapter argues that the performative engagement with memory can never be simply about the past, but always about aspects of the past as negotiated in the present.

Developing out of these concerns, the terms in which Chapter Five unfolds are time-based: here the elaboration of a construct of rhythms (both of space and of performance) involves thinking about time-frames, daytime and night-time, duration, continuities and discontinuities, evolution and decay, pulse and beat, dynamics, simultaneity and timelessness. The application of these ideas to the analysis of a range of places and performances results in my suggestion that a focus on the inherent and multiple temporalities of space allows us to complicate our approaches to site-specificity at the same time as avoiding some of the ethical dangers of an image of site as homogeneous, fixed and unchanging.

Finally, Chapter Six adopts a metaphor of *siting* to position the notion of spectatorship within both the contexts of this thesis and the spaces of scholarship on audience and reception. Intrigued by the ambiguity and reflexivity inherent in the act of viewing as it is theorized by Nick Kaye (2000: 29-30), this chapter explores a more detailed theoretical framework for such reflexivity. Its route moves through spaces of witnessing, participation and the spectatorial text (Kennedy 2001) before developing a sense of the multiple, dynamic and shifting positions of spectating that might be understood in terms of hybridity.

In the relationship between Parts One and Two of the thesis, between modes of orientation and exploration and the other paths signposted through boxed texts, an argument around method emerges. This imagines a critical practice that functions heuristically (Ulmer 1994) *and* analytically, whereby the strategies and tactics chosen are dynamically and reflexively connected with the performance practices discussed. Furthermore, through the discussions of these chapters, a number of issues have emerged as holding particular shared relevance. These have to do with: associations and tensions between theoretical, geographical and imaginary spaces; the notion of spatial engagement and the various forms it might take; the political, ethical and ideological implications of performing in ‘found spaces’; the relationship between space, performance and spectators; a sense of ‘theatreness’ to which site-specific practices implicitly refer; and a dialectics of mobility and rootedness. I want to suggest that, in all of these contexts, the concept of negotiation is useful for understanding the processes of site-specificity.

On negotiation

The concept of negotiation, and the practices it implies, is invoked here in both of its senses; while it might take the form of (metaphorical) dialogue, it might equally involve the strategic manoeuvring round, past or beyond an obstacle. If my use of the term conjures an image of equal parties holding an amicable boardroom discussion in pursuit of mutual agreement, then, I want to counter, or at least modify, that image with another, which is *on the ground* or *in the field* rather than removed to an apparently neutral point of meeting, and is concerned with tactics, logistics, *modus operandi* and the testing of possibilities, aligned more therefore with the figure of de

Certeau's pedestrian than with the urban planner. Site-specificity might be characterized by the processes of negotiation it sets in place, and these are processes both of dialogue and of 'making do'.

To a large extent, I have argued for a model of site-specific performance as an act of negotiation between the performance itself, the site that is not a theatre space (though is inevitably already being *performed* in all kinds of ways), and the spectators, who may be aligned more with one of these categories than the other. Remembering that the three participants in this model rarely occupy equal positions in relation to one another and to the resulting event, and that each performance event will play out and settle upon a new balance between these elements, helps to ensure that our use of the term *negotiation* does not neutralize "potential confrontation, resistance, or subversion", as Barbara Bender has warned (1998: 63). Rather, I have chosen to focus on negotiation because the term enables us to interrogate the shifting and dynamic relationships between all elements of the performance event.

As we have seen, however, site-specificity also involves the negotiation of other ideas and practices: of a notion of 'theatreness'; of other means of performing space; of 'locatedness' and being out of place. The concept of negotiation remains significant here because site-specificity still carries a sense of the untried, the provisional, the yet-to-be-tested, thus inviting input from all parties regarding the ways in which this new theatrical arrangement might work as well as requiring a set of tactics for its articulation. Site-specific performance, like the spaces it enacts and disrupts, might best be conceived of as in process, always under negotiation.

Off site – beyond the thesis

At the end of a thesis that, like the practices it has discussed, was always deliberately 'out of place', it seems appropriate to move out of the site of the thesis, reinforcing the openness of the discursive structure by gesturing beyond it. In this gesture I want to suggest that, though my discussion has raised issues around the discourse of space and performance more generally, site-specificity remains a useful concept because it enables us to think through what would seem to be pressing questions: of the local and the global, of what Britain might mean in relation, for example, to changing

understandings of America and Europe, of cyberspaces and their implications for our relationships to physical spaces, and of those recalcitrant spaces that, in Graeme Miller's terms (above), seem to remain "resistant to narrative".

In the renewed energy of these political and social contexts, the reorientations of this afterword might be brought into dialogue with future site-specific practices to pave the way for new explorations. I have been concerned here to ask questions about the sites in which we make, experience and respond to performance and the ways in which we might understand these; the effect of these questions will change as they are differently articulated in new historical and cultural moments. Does 'site' signal the same meanings as it did in the '60s when sculptors alerted viewers to their own situation, or in the '80s when theatre makers began to experiment with the alternative possibilities it seemed to offer? How might the dialectics of movement and stillness proposed here be inflected in response to contemporary versions of displacement and territory-making? With what kinds of site can and should performance engage *now*, and with what aims? Off site, beyond this thesis, we might imagine the movement of new explorations towards a critical sense of the role that a specifically *sited* performance practice might take. The current study points the way, in its suggestion that we will always understand such performance from the rule-bound, intricately woven, temporalized, hybridized and always negotiated spaces in which we are positioned.

Appendices

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Appendix One: Questionnaire

Site-Specific Performance in Britain

Questionnaire for companies/practitioners

The 'Site-Specific Performance in Britain' survey is being conducted as part of PhD research at the University of Surrey. Its aim is to produce meaningful statistics regarding a performance form that is little documented and whose practitioners are often working in isolation from a sense of the wider context within Britain. While I realize that most people working in performance are always overworked, I would greatly appreciate your taking the time to complete and return this questionnaire and hope that the results may prove to be of benefit to your work. Please number your answers on a separate page, or create space for your answers between the questions below if you prefer. The fuller your answers, the better represented your company will be in the final report. You may feel that some questions do not apply to you; please answer only those questions relevant to your group. If your group has been disbanded or no longer produces site-specific performance please indicate this and go on to answer the relevant questions in the past tense.

Company/practitioner name:
General 1) In what year was your group founded? 2) Is your group operational at this time? If not, when did the group disband and for what reasons?
Terminology 3) How would you define 'site-specific performance' in the context of your work? 4) According to this definition, roughly what proportion of your work fits the category 'site-specific'? 5) In what year did you produce your first site-specific performance? 6) Would you use the term site-specific when describing your work: a) to someone within the performance profession? b) to someone outside of the performance profession? c) on a funding application? 7) If not, what other terms would you use to describe this sort of work, and why?
Practicalities 8) How is your work funded: a) by whom? (e.g. Arts Council, Regional Arts Board, sponsorship, workshops and education projects) b) on what basis? (per project, or for the company over a specified period) 9) Are you funded differently for site-specific and non-site-specific projects? 10) Have you ever been commissioned to produce a particular site-specific performance by the controllers of that site? If so: a) who commissioned the work? b) for which site? c) in which month and year? d) please give the name, and any further details if possible, of the resulting performance. 11) What are your reasons for producing site-specific performance? (please expand on your answer and choose more than one category if appropriate) a) financial b) political c) aesthetic

- d) challenge/experiment
- e) reaching a wider audience
- f) other (please specify)

Material

- 12) What proportion of your site-specific work would you class as 'local' to the area in which you are based? Is a sense of immediate locality important to your work?
- 13) Does your site-specific performance tour? If so, do you feel that this affects the 'site-specificity' of the work? In what ways?
- 14) What proportion of your site-specific performance takes place:
 - a) indoors?
 - b) outdoors?
- 15) What proportion of your site-specific performance takes place:
 - a) in real space?
 - b) in cyberspace (e.g. on the Internet; on CD ROM)?
- 16) Is the majority of your performance work:
 - a) text-based?
 - b) non-text-based?
- 17) Does this differ for your site-specific performance? i.e. is the majority of your site-specific work:
 - a) text-based?
 - b) non-text-based?
- 18) In your work, does the site tend to influence the performance in terms of:
 - a) form (the physical aspects of the performance)?
 - b) content (narratives and stories inspired by the site)?
 - c) both of the above?
 - d) other (please specify)?

Membership

- 19) How many members does your group have? (indicate both permanent members and associates regularly worked with if applicable)
- 20) Have any of your group members been (or are they currently) involved with other companies producing site-specific performance? Please give details (e.g. who? which other companies? on which projects? when?).
- 21) Have you ever collaborated with other companies or individuals to make site-specific performance? If so:
 - a) please give details (e.g. who? on which projects? when?).
 - b) for what reasons was the collaboration instigated?

Other Information

- 22) Please name (and give details of if possible) any other British companies or practitioners you know of who produce site-specific theatre/performance and should therefore be included in this survey.
- 23) Any further details you could provide of your company and your site-specific performance would be greatly appreciated. For instance, a list of your site-specific performances with date and site information would be extremely useful in compiling the survey report. Any publicity or press material would also be very useful.
- 24) Please indicate whether you would like to receive a copy of the final survey results and analysis.

Appendix Two: List of Companies/Solo Artists Participating in Survey

<u>Name</u>	<u>Based</u>	<u>Website</u>
1028	Glasgow	invisible.gq.nu/k.htm
Bill Aitchison	London	
Bobby Baker	London	www.bobbybakersdailylife.com
Blaize (formerly Charivari)	West Yorkshire	
Boilerhouse	Edinburgh	www.boilerhouse.org.uk
Cerberus Theatre Company	Edinburgh	www.cerberustheatre.co.freeuk.com
The Common Players	Exeter, Devon	www.common-players.org.uk
Cotton Grass Theatre Company	Peak District	www.cottongrass.mirai.co.uk
Creation Theatre Company	Oxford	www.creationtheatre.co.uk
Anne-Marie Culhane	Edinburgh	
Emergency Exit Arts	London	www.eea.org.uk
Fragments and Monuments	London	
Helena Goldwater	London	
Grid Iron Theatre Company	Edinburgh	
Horse + Bamboo	Lancashire	www.horseandbamboo.org
Impossible Theatre	Yorkshire	www.impossible.org.uk
IOU	West Yorkshire	www.ioutheatre.org
Jude Kerr	London	
Miriam Keye/ Strandlooper	Leicester	
Kneehigh Theatre	Cornwall	www.kneehigh.co.uk
Kunstwerk-Blend interdisciplinary company	London	www.kunstwerk-blend.co.uk
Kate Lawrence	Surrey	www.artform.demon.co.uk/stcatherines.htm
The Lion's Part	London	www.thelionspart.co.uk
London Bubble	London	www.londonbubble.org.uk
Lone Twin	London	
Justin Mckeown	Preston	www.justin.00home.com
Moving Being Theatre Company	Cardiff	
The Olimpias	Wales	www.olimpias.net
Out of the Blue Dance Company	London	
Sue Palmer	Somerset	www.glastonburynetradio.co.uk/hairraising
Pentabus Theatre Company	West Midlands	www.homeusers.prestel.co.uk/pentabus
PickleHerring Theatre	Manchester	
Red Earth	Brighton	www.redearth.co.uk
Hester Reeve	Lancaster	www.ashdendirectory.org.uk/directory/display.asp?index=1
Riptide	Leicester	www.riptide.force9.co.uk
Rotozaza	London	www.rotozaza.co.uk
Sirens Crossing	London	
Station House Opera	London	www.stationhouseopera.com
Storm Theatre Company	Coventry	
Theatre Nomad	London	www.theatrenomad.com
Walk the Plank	Manchester	www.walktheplank.co.uk
Welfare State International	Cumbria	www.welfare-state.org
Whalley Range All Stars	Manchester	www.wras.org.uk
Wrights & Sites	Exeter, Devon	www.exeter.ac.uk/~shodge/ws.html

Appendix Three – Interview Transcripts

Petra Kuppers interview – 30 August 2001

FW: What is your performance background?

PK: I started making theatre in 1987: I was a student in Cologne and was very involved with the feminist theatre scene at the time. So really the sort of things that influenced me most at the beginning were the theatre traditions surrounding Brecht, Piscator, community-based theatre, Laban, Bausch – and I created work which now, in British categorization, I would call physical theatre/dance work. They all were multi-media works. I was working sometimes in conventional theatre spaces, sometimes not; one performance was in the studio part of a theatre, a very industrial room with lots of huge pipes which became part of the performance.

So at that stage were you categorizing the work as 'site-specific'?

No. I think site-specific is a problematic term; it means a lot of different things. For me, I think about site-specificity when I make a piece really taking the place and the history of the place I work in into account, when that's part of the creative process. So it's not that I'm coming up with the sort of work that I want to do and putting it into a place, but that the place has an important part in the creation process. That's what I would call a site-specific piece. I think that the first site-specific work I did, where I actually thought in that kind of way, was a piece at Warwick Theatre Festival called *Vampyra*¹. It was in a night-club, with one of those 80s mirror-balls – we were incorporating the various coloured lights and aspects like that so we tried to be very aware of what the place was used for and tried to incorporate the audience address of the place into what we were doing.

Were you performing at a time when the night-club-goers would be there or was it rather out-of-hours?

Out-of-hours. But it was very much the audience of the place; it didn't feel completely divorced from what was going on there. The structure of the piece was episodic, it was very much driven by music and dance. We were using the dance space in different ways: for instance, in one of the scenes we had a guy in a beautiful suit and a woman in an equally beautiful, old-fashioned velvet dress, and they were dancing the tango, a really beautiful tango, and also the waltz, and they did it in a very 'Come Dancing' ballroom kind of way in this very obvious night-club space, and that was very exciting – and funny.

Were the spectators in the dance space with you?

Yes, they were sitting all around us, it was in the round.

Your recent work with The Olimpias seems to operate at the intersection between dance, theatre, new media, and community arts practice. You've spoken a bit about your background, but what other influences have led you to this mix of work?

Well, one thing that has led to the creation of The Olimpias and that led also to the kinds of aesthetics that I'm now embracing is my work in community environments. What happened was that in 1996 I started a project in collaboration with the Swansea University department of continuing education and with Neath and Port Talbot mental health services, and I was going to go in and work with a group of people with mental health diagnoses in regular weekly meetings. So I went in with my Brecht under one arm and my Boal under the other arm and was ever so prepared, but of course I had to start learning really quickly. It was a very exciting process; I went in with all this theoretical knowledge, and I had done community work but it had all been with people who came to me. Now here was me going into a very different sort of community. These were not women who were somewhere on the way to feminist enlightenment; they were in a very different place. These were people with moderate to severe mental health difficulties; basically what that means is that they were in and out of mental health hospital, people who were regularly 'committed'. So I started working with them and I tried to use very basic theatre exercises and movement exercises. You know the exercise where you centre yourself? I found that these people just fell over, they had no sense of centre. So we worked for a long time on how you work in your own body and how you can own the space that you're in. I work from the premise that in order to have a voice to speak with you need to have a space to speak from, and that

place to speak from is your understanding of your physicality, the ownership of your body and the ownership of the space that surrounds you. For me there is a very clear relationship between representation and oppression, having no images by which you see yourself, being excluded from many things (these people are very often excluded when it comes to housing, they're very often excluded when it comes to shopping, because they are seen as freaks, weirdos, mad people), and the way that exclusion, I think, manifests itself in the way that people inhabit their bodies, or don't inhabit these bodies. So we worked for three years dealing with these issues: not as therapy, though of course it had a therapeutic aspect, but as a political intervention. We understood what we were doing as a form of social therapy, not aimed at the individual that is 'wrong' and needs to be made 'right', but instead as a way of dealing with wider social issues. Now, in order to do that I needed to find a way in which we could share what we were doing in our sessions, because there we were parading a sense of beauty and dignity for ourselves – how would we show that to the wider world? And this is really where I started to think about new media, that was the first time that I used new media as something other than a post-modern background. In other shows, like *Vampyra*, I have used reels of film and video, but this was the first time that it became an integral part of what we were doing, that we were creating images ourselves.

As a tool, an intervention...?

That's right. Really the problem was that a lot of my performers didn't want to be in front of an audience. And of course we still have a social regime which says 'this is performance' and 'this is not performance'. The people I work with very rarely fall into what you would consider 'good dance' in those kinds of categories; they're people who have very little technique, who don't have stamina, and they're people who often are in pain or are in other ways afraid of exposing themselves. So we thought of other ways of working, and we invited photographers to come and join us in the group, and videographers as well. They didn't just come in and make pictures – instead they were invited to join. We had very long meditative sequences in the work that we were doing and you can see that in the videos that we made, you can see the video moving in the rhythm of the breath. What we created then was a video installation, and that was the first time I used new media in that way. It was also the first piece under The Olimpias label: creating relationships between community arts, new media and identity politics.

Do you see a direct link between the work that you were interested in doing to do with taking a political ownership of the space of your body and your subsequent use of site-specific modes?

Yes, very much. There's a direct link between finding a space for yourself in your own body and then placing that body in space. So a lot of the interventions that we worked on had to do with paying attention to the way that we understand the space to work for us and paying attention to how we inhabit the space, the rules of how we inhabit a space. In the work I've written about Body Spaces I talk about blueprinting: how certain environments are blueprinted for certain people. Now, in terms of mental health that might be a bit different, but what you still see is that certain people are included and that other people are excluded and if you work with specific spaces you can create a different sense of ownership. For instance, with the Traces project² I was describing, this on-going three year project, we moved spaces – we went from a more care-oriented space to an arts centre, so the last year we worked at the Pontardawe Arts Centre and that's where we created our installation. So in a way, although the actual video installation is not site-specific, the process paid a lot of attention to site and to the meaning of spaces.

You've mentioned the notion of the 'blueprinting' of the space and the possibility of making an intervention into that space. Could you talk a bit more about how this concept operates for you?

What I understand with blueprinting is that our environment is set up for certain bodies and that's normalized, it's invisible. We have doors of a certain height: if you're taller than that or if you're much smaller than that you have problems with our kinds of doors. The windows are set at a certain height. This is very obvious, for instance, if you go into a gallery: when I'm using my wheelchair and I go into a gallery, quite often all I see is mirrors, because the glass reflects if you look at it from a different angle than straight-on. My grandmother, who's a very small woman, would have probably had a very similar experience in galleries because her angle is different. So that's one example of blueprinting; much more obvious examples are things like stairs: certain people can walk stairs, other people can't walk stairs. I'm not just talking about wheelchair users but also young parents with baby buggies –

there is no space for children or babies in certain kinds of environments. There's no space for women in certain environments. The spaces that surround us understand that there's some idea of normality, a 'normal' or 'natural' person, and a lot of people that I work with are excluded by, or experience distress in, those kinds of environments. So we're trying to show up the rules, the habits, show these invisible traces of meanings that you can find in environments.

So performance can draw attention to the blueprint. Can it also re-blueprint the space, or are you not interested in doing that?

Absolutely, I do think it can. What I'm not interested in is the kind of 'guilt' performance: "hey, I can't get in there". All of The Olimpias' shows deal with seduction, pleasure and play. That's very important to the work we do, so it's not a reductionist understanding of political performance which just shows up something that might be wrong. Instead I'm trying to create a sense of desire, a trajectory of longing for difference. I'm really interested in difference as something that enriches us. What we're trying to create is something that seduces you and draws you in. So we create play around places. In *Landscaping*³, for instance, at the end of the show we re-functioned the staircase: taking strips of maps and putting them on the stairs we invited the audience to come over to the staircase and place on it various abstracted figures – actually they're from children's play models: little trees and traffic signs and little abstract people – and in this way we re-figure the staircase: it's no longer a place of going up and down, but instead it's a place where we all sit and play and draw faces on each other. We create a different map, a different form of being on the stairs, in a very playful manner. The same happens in *Body Spaces*⁴ where we created different maps, different ways of being in the space – we had pathways that you could follow on the ground, and fantasy stories that open up different perspectives.

Given, then, your interest in issues of disability, mobility and the possibilities of different types of movement in space that may not be the obvious movement, to what extent is your site-specific performance about the play between access and inaccessibility? Do those two categories play out a dynamic in your performance?

This was something that we had to deal with in *Body Spaces*, and in *Landscaping*. Disability has also two sides, if you like, it also has two different dynamics that work against each other. One is the representational aspect of disability: disability is seen as something which connotes tragedy, loss, a whole cultural narrative about tragedy. The other dynamic is the phenomenological experience of disability: your specific way of inhabiting your body and inhabiting the world. In my case, I have a pain-related disability, so yes I do experience pain, but if I'm in a very painful place in my body I can experience the world around me differently, I can experience the site differently, I have a different sense of the distances that it takes to walk, for instance, from this chair over to the wall. So I have a different map in my mind from someone who doesn't experience pain, in the same way that Kanta⁵, who is hearing-impaired, experiences place differently when she doesn't see you and she can't hear what's going on behind her. That's a different map as well. So the phenomenological experience and the narrative experience, the semiotic meaning, are different. And that's quite interesting and a good place to start making performances, and seeing different sites.

You've spoken about the tension between the phenomenological experience of disability and the cultural narrative of disability. Do these two categories form a starting point for your work?

Yes, they are a starting point, they are something that inform everything I do. Every work I do has a political agenda. I think that working with a specific site, working with the environment that people live in, helps them to articulate some of the tensions between, for instance, images of madness and one's own experiences. By paying attention to yourself, your own little rituals, your own landscape (landscape in the broadest sense), you can excavate some of the dignity and privacy and the beauty of your own experience. I think that's why I see the connection here between semiotic frames and phenomenological experience.

How do you begin to build a site-specific performance?

First of all, every show is different, so let me be specific about particular shows. What happened with *Earth Stories*⁶ was that in starting to think about the where we were we looked at tourist maps surrounding the place and we talked about the Brecon Beacons as a cultural space that has a certain

imagination attached to it – on television shows, on postcards, in tourist imaginations. Then we were looking at legends and myths: very specific Welsh ideas about the Brecon Beacons. We read myths and we acted out some of them, got our bodies somewhat into them – not as if we were trying to create a theatre piece but instead trying to create a kind of physical ownership of some of these stories. We used movement rituals and we did a lot of things to do with gifting: our words were gifts, or we would use found materials as gifts: very romantic things like flowers, or just an individual grass blade, or a twig. We started to pay attention to those found materials and to their materiality, to their texture, and infuse them with this gifting process. From this we built our own site, creating fantasies, roles and rituals in the existing fabric.

In *Body Spaces* we explored lines of movement, pathways that we could take around the space. Which ones we can do, which ones we can't do, which ones we would like to do, which fantasy ones we can see. And we sounded spaces by throwing lines of sound across the space and echoing it out in that way.

So there's a variety of techniques. All of the work is site-specific in terms of the physical site but also in terms of the peopled site. I think that's quite important – that there's a peopled site, a community site. That there are hierarchies, narratives, politics, myths...

In your writing on Landscaping you talked about how interesting it was that the space signified differently for the three of you. Is that something that's come out in other works, for instance in Earth Stories, where different people have read, or interpreted, or responded to the space in different ways and that has emerged in the work?

Absolutely, yes. In *Earth Stories* this is the home environment for those people who were involved and so one of the areas that we investigated was the childhood narrative. For instance, in workshops we looked at a childhood visit in these areas, walks in the area, and used the episodes creatively in workshops. And what we had there was a very different imagination of people who had utterly different experiences of the locality. Also, a locality is not one thing: it's a network of so many other places. So when people were thinking about this particular place they were making connections to other places. Our memory doesn't just see one place – it sees an archaeology or 'layeredness' of different places, where this here connotes maybe a trip to Eastbourne and a number of different places come together. A place is not just a physical space but also an imagined, layered, deep space.

You've created work for both rural and urban environments. Do these two categories engender fundamentally different processes and performance outcomes?

Yes, there are some things that I'm very conscious of when I'm working in a city that are very different from working in a rural environment. In a rural environment I often work with the group for the group: there's no audience. Or the only audience is the 'found audience', if you like, like the fishermen walking by. Found audience – audience *trouvé*. So we find different ways of sharing our work, for example through video.

When I work in the city the process is very different, and I think the main difference for me is the idea of the distracted imagination, the flâneur. The flâneur is very much associated for me with the city: someone who passes by, who only gives *some* attention to things. So the work that I've tried to do in cities is very often what I would call *en passant*: minor, not major, it's not in your way so that you have to deal with it. It's something that says: look, touch, see, play, engage – in a very small way. It doesn't need you to sit there and watch it, because that doesn't seem to me an audience address appropriate to the particular places that I was working in. I don't want to say that the city is always like that – there are all kinds of different engagements within the city as well – but in the specific places that I was interested in I felt very much that this idea of the passer-by, the flâneur, was important. In *Landscaping* at the Chisenhale there were people rushing past us, up and down the stairs: that was very much part of the distracted imagination.

So the distracted imagination relates to the secondary spaces that you've written about, as opposed to the primary spaces in which a longer engagement is invited.

Yes, that's right. I think that these are often the most interesting spaces because the blueprinting that we talked about earlier is so naturalized. It doesn't have the grand frame of the theatre or the gallery; instead it has the framing of the everyday, of something that is supposedly natural. We can insert a sliver of difference in there, a slight irritation but a productive one.

But the theatre and the gallery are also blueprinted.

Oh yes, absolutely.

Are you interested in inserting that sliver of difference there as well?

I've found it very effective and interesting to work with the everyday in the everyday. Of course the theatre and gallery are blueprinted, but they're not blueprinted as the everyday: they're blueprinted as the special frame. And it goes back to what I mentioned earlier about my first experiences with Traces: the people that I work with very often do not want to be on stage. I think that's quite important to be very clear about – it can be productive in itself to rewrite scripts, make social relations and stories visible.

The Olimpias website mentions that the work is interested in "creating new encounters between performers and spectators". In your experience, can site-specific performance achieve this, and how?

Well, what I'm very interested in is choreographing spectators' experience of the site but also of other people. Choreographing that experience as in, for instance, *Body Spaces* with a different route through a site, a different perspective of how you walk where. I do find that what happens in site-specific work is that the scripts are not as firm. Because it's not a conventional site like a theatre or a gallery where certain rules of engagement apply, and instead site-specific work is quite often outside art environments where you address (or you might address, if you're lucky) a lot of people who are not conventional art audiences, the scripts are not as fixed: people come up, people tell you things, there's no rule for 'oh I've got to sit quietly because a performance is going on'. So people just walk on in amazing ways. Or don't – as I mentioned with *Landscaping*, it was really interesting to see how people would stop at the top of the stairs when they saw that something was going on, wondering what was the polite thing to do. We were looking at one particular woman and we were actually signing for her to come and she still couldn't quite work out whether this was a script or whether she was being addressed as a person. So a lot of that is going on and it creates new encounters. You deal with that space in a different way, it becomes a setting space for new scripts, a new way of meeting someone. For instance, in *Landscaping* you might have an empty wheelchair standing about and people just sit on it, which is good. I love it when people just walk through a work, or just come up and start to talk with a performer. And it all has happened before, lots of times.

And they then become part of the performance as well.

Absolutely. And something else: when I'm showing something which doesn't have a live element – installation, traces of performance as I quite often call them – there are books and pens about and we get quite a lot of feedback. Not necessarily the art gallery kind of feedback – oh, nice pictures, thank you very much – but even some stories. In *Body Spaces*, for instance, we had various stories lying on the ground – they were all over the ground on different coloured bits of paper, so they created a field of reference – and some of them were empty and some people, even without being given a specific instruction, came and wrote new stories on these papers.

Which then became a part of the experience for the next set of spectators.

That's right. There was a different form of engagement. I mean, it couldn't happen everywhere, but in a hospital it can just happen, people are just waiting about.

Notes:

¹ Warwick University, 1992.

² A community project and subsequent video installation based on community movement sessions held since 1996 in Briton Ferry and Pontardawe Arts Centre, Wales.

³ This was a performance and research residency in the stairwell of Chisenhale Dance Space, London 2001.

⁴ Three site-specific installations created in a residency with young disabled people; the installations took place in three sites in Manchester in October 2000: Contact Theatre, Manchester Royal Infirmary outpatients' lounge; Contact car park. A Digital Summer commission.

⁵ Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, an Olimpias associate performer.

⁶ A Video Poem made out of a residency in the Brecon Beacons National Park with the Ystradgynlais Community Contact Group, 2001. Funded by a Mind Millennium Award.

Clifford McLucas interview – 6 October 2001

FW: What are the types of place that interest you most when it comes to creating work?

CL: I became a member of Brith Gof in about 1989 and at that time the company was based in Cardiff. I, however, was based in West Wales, in the small rural town of Aberystwyth. I'd moved there back in the 70s and learned to speak the Welsh language so I was culturally very committed to that place. When I started working with the company we made performances in urban sites: old factories, docklands areas, all of those derelict urban locations that hung around post-industrial cities like Cardiff and parts of London in the late 80s. At first, because of my background in architecture, I was very excited about engaging with those places. Over ten years, that enthusiasm's shifted and over the past five years I've been more concerned to do things in rural locations. Now this is not an aesthetic decision. One of the reasons I'm excited about working in rural locations in Wales is because that's where the cultural situation is most stark, where there are issues of language, issues of identity, issues of belonging – all of those strange things that I think we find quite difficult to deal with at the end of the twentieth century or the beginning of the twenty-first. In other words, if you make a piece of site-specific work – and we'll have to define what we mean by that soon – in a place like an old factory in Cardiff, you can do what you like: nobody's going to say it's inappropriate. But if you work in a ruined farmhouse in the middle of a forest in West Wales people *will* say when something is not appropriate, because there is still a living history associated with that place. There are people living lives there, so whether you like it or not, you're much more implicated culturally, politically, geographically, socially. That's when it's possible to do very deep and rich work. I'm not terribly interested in making site-specific work anywhere else but Wales because I think with those places (another thing we've got to start talking about is *place* rather than *site*) comes a whole set of conditions, possibilities and potentials for what I think is a very radical contemporary practice within a 'post-colonial' world.

So for you there's an ethical implication in your work. There are more ethical questions asked of you in a rural location.

Absolutely. But remember, Brith Gof is a Welsh-language company. The Welsh language is normally associated with very specific and conservative traditions and yet we work in what I would consider to be a fairly contemporary way. What's lacking in many small places like Wales is a belief, I think, in a contemporary possibility for its cultural identity. As an Englishman, working in the Welsh language is a political act – it's about finding a way of existing honourably in this place. So Brith Gof's work has always been run through with an ethics – we haven't just made performances about things that vaguely interest us – and I think that's meant that the company's work has also often sat uncomfortably within a more contemporary performance tradition, because the work is 'about' something. It's not in a very traditional format, but it is definitely *about* something – it's a kind of a cultural and critical poetics and it is politicized (or, if there was a word, 'culturized') in all kinds of ways. And so what we try to do, or what we tried to do, is to find a way of making work which comes at issues, historical events or cultural events in ways which are poetic but which are also resonant within the reality of the political situation in Wales. So yes, there is an ethical aspect of it. I think my use of the term 'site-specific' is very precise. It's not a kind of general catch-all term for anything that happens outside of a theatre.

And it's meaningless if that's what it starts to become.

Well, it's ok as a kind of 'catch-all', you know, it's ok if people say, 'Oh, these people do site-specific work', but all they're doing is a play in a forest or...

Shakespeare in the park...

Absolutely. There's nothing wrong with that, perhaps it's nice and it's interesting to some people, but it's a long, long way from what I'm talking about. In Brith Gof's practice, the place where the audience and the theatre-makers come together in a particular context creates a very complex and rich contract. Whereas going to see Shakespeare in the park, I think, is a much simpler contract. I mean, you know what this thing would look like if it was on a stage and it doesn't look that much different – you've got a certain ambience which is extra but there's nothing else going on there, the place is not being engaged with in any sense, I don't think.

Thinking, then, about this contract between the audience and the performance – so I guess we're looking at the witness angle in your model of host, ghost and witness – I'm wondering what the

possibilities might be for site-specific performance to begin to redefine the performance/spectator relationship. And what are the features that are necessary in a site-specific performance if it's to try to renegotiate that relationship?

That's a fat question! The thing that you fleetingly mentioned there – this host, ghost and witness – is a very crude schematic way I've found of talking about what we try to do. It's been particularly useful with people who've never known site-specific work. My notion is that normally within a theatre, because everything is already known and there's a whole set of procedures which are understood by the performers, the technicians, the marketing people and the audience, there's a contract which deeply written in. Within theatre buildings, within conventional, orthodox theatre, there's a whole set of things which is never questioned. If audiences go to theatres and then come to see a site-specific show, they arrive with a kind of a 'theatre in the mind'. And that's very dangerous, we need to get rid of that quite quickly, I think. I don't mean in a violent way, but you need to allow the audience to understand that the theatre that they bring in their heads when they go to see a show on a main stage might not be useful if they come and see Brith Gof in Blaenafon rubber factory! So, in the idea of the host, the ghost and the witness... the Host is the place where the thing is taking place: now that's an active participant, it's where people have worked and lived, histories have been generated, possibly where people have died. It's implicated in all kinds of ways in people's lives. The Ghost, which is this strange transient thing that we all make when we're making theatre, haunts that place for maybe two months if you're lucky, but not much more. And like all ghosts you can see through it, you see the previous place and its existence and you see this activated thing that you've placed inside it. And the thing doesn't exist as an event until you have a Witness - an audience - coming to see it. Now, all of those three things are active – it's not that the building is dead, the audience is dead, and the only creative work is taking place within what the theatre-makers do. I would suggest that 'The Work' is a hybrid of all three and you can mobilize the three in all kinds of ways. You can organize the relationship with the audience in a whole range of practical or architectural ways: is the audience sitting down, walking through the piece, or free to move wherever it wants? Is there engagement with the performers or the scenography or the location? Are those audiences people who used to work in that building, or who have relatives who worked and lived in that building? We did a piece called Haeam in an old British Coal workshop down in the Welsh valleys with a gantry crane running from one end of the building to the other, and the building had been disused for 15 years or so. In the show the guy who had used to drive the gantry crane during the time when the building was a factory actually came and operated the crane for us. Now I'm very fascinated by what that means; there's something going on in that which means that it's possible to see the building in a different way for that person, it's possible to see that person in a different way, and if members of the audience realize that these things are going on then they see everything in another way. There's a set of negotiations, therefore, that take place, and I think in that relationship between the Host, the Ghost and the Witness in this extended thing that I define as 'The Work' there is a mass of opportunities for resonances, for atmospheres, for the delivery of information in entirely new contexts: it's poetically a very rich form. And I think it can and does – and I've seen it happen – rewrite the contract between the audience and the work.

You've started to talk about how the audience might approach this sort of work with this memory of the theatre building in the back of their minds. This implies that there might be another ghost that the performance-maker takes into account: the ghost of the theatre and its conventions. And I guess you face a set of decisions there with regard to how much you might want to play on those conventions and how much you might want to disregard them or invite the audience immediately to see other cultural models as more relevant.

All of these things and a million others become questions as soon as you decide to think of the work as this 'trinity' of the Host, the Ghost and the Witness. All of these things suddenly become negotiable and that's why it's exciting to me, because, as the prime activators of this strange thing called 'The Work' (which we've now defined) it does mean that you can work with a set of memories, a set of realities, a set of culturally specific forms. And you might work with those for a while at some point but then you might shift from them. I mean, this all sounds very manipulative but it's not at all like that and I don't like working in that kind of way: you know, you set up one convention in order to destroy it. But what will happen quite naturally in these site-specific works is that you will see the audience engaging with the work and the ideas in entirely new ways – ways which they would not do if they were sitting in a theatre. Now, if you start doing something in Blaenafon rubber factory, I can't think what you might bring with you from the theatre that would be useful or interesting. I think that's often been a point of tension between the people who are working on the performances. When I first came into Brith Gof – from a training as an architect – for all the radicalism of the company and for all its lack of lineage within the conventional theatre world, we still had words like director, designer,

soundtrack, stage manager, technical manager – all of these models which came from the stage-based theatre world. And, you know, some of them were useful, and many of the people who've worked in our pieces were trained in that model and so they would come along with a whole set of procedures. But because I didn't train in that model, because I trained in an architectural model where you have an entirely different methodology and hierarchy, over my first three or four years with the company we had to find and create a team of people who could work in a different way. For instance, it's almost impossible to cue a site-specific show in a conventional way, certainly if it's operating in the round, so you need to have a different kind of energy running through the process and a different set of hierarchies for making sure that people understand what's going on. And what happened more and more during the work after the first two years was that I took on the role of a kind of an architect: not an architect in a static sense but a kind of architect through time and space. Often I would work out a kind of a scenography or a kind of scenario or a mixture of the two on very complicated scoring sheets on paper – I would need to do that on paper because we should remember that these things are horribly expensive, and it's very difficult to work them out in the building with all of the technologies in place – so you have to do a lot of pre-planning. And so it might be that the performers and the person who's directing the performance, who might not be me, will have to develop detail within a structure or a map that is kind of given, as it has been in existence for weeks or months. Now that puts a very different set of responsibilities or hierarchies or power relationships into the middle of the model. It is about how we mobilize this space, these ideas and this audience at this time, and there might also be many things which you're not in control of. We did *Haearn*, for instance, in a small town called Tredegar, which is one of those towns in the south Wales valleys that were absolutely decimated during the 80s. It's a kind of post-industrial nightmare, in a way, with high unemployment and all kinds of social problems. When we did this piece, which was about the industrial revolution and in a sense about the creation of the working classes, it resonated in all kinds of immediate and poetic ways with its audiences, but the one thing that really cranked the energy level up was that a fortnight before the first show Michael Heseltine closed all of the pits in south Wales.

In other words, if a work invites it, these kinds of external social and cultural things can set up resonances within the project that are very powerful. There's a way in which site-specific work can stretch to the horizon, not in terms of the design or in terms of the architecture, but culturally. It's very exciting when you get something like that happening, and we've done maybe three or four performances where the work has become so much more than simply a performance in a particular location, due to contextual conditions outside of our control.

So the notion of site-specificity, then, might be expanded to invoke other sites, other places.

Oh yes. One of the questions that arises when you're placing a Ghost into a Host is the question of suitability: does this fit? And I think it's safe to say that in the first three or four pieces that I worked on, the really big pieces of work that we made back at the beginning of the 90s, there was a hand-in-glove relationship between the Host and the Ghost. We did a piece of work called *Gododdin* in an old car factory in Cardiff. *Gododdin* is a very ancient Welsh poem which in a way is about the slaughtering of a nation – it's much more interesting than that, but within that place, doing it in a building which had housed the Rover car factory, there's a kind of metaphor of social or industrial slaughtering and so on and there's a way in which culturally and also architecturally the thing fitted. And that can be powerful. But then we did a piece of work called *Tri Bywyd*...

This is the Three Lives project...

That's right. ... which was the first real, serious site-specific work that we did in a rural location in west Wales. But I thought that if we did a piece in a landscape which is very beautiful and picturesque we needed to do something to stop this simply becoming a one item agenda for us in that place. I tried to do that by taking two lives which were not of the site and bringing them together to create this strange hybrid three-architecture event at the site. I'm no longer convinced by those early and simpler 'hand in glove' relationships – those notions of 'suitability' – because I think that attitude presumes that at this place there are certain clear meanings and no others. That's very prevalent in rural communities, in notions of tradition, you know: this thing happened here and nothing else could happen here and you cannot read it in any way but that. Well, an audience comes with all kinds of readings, you can't predetermine what it might and might not read, so you tend to corral meanings in all kinds of ways that might be possible. And the first thing is to try to be sensitive to what those possibilities might be. And so I think, in that particular work, it wasn't a hand-in-glove relationship. We generated a much more complicated and troubled relationship which really excited me: between the Ghost – which was a complicated thing in itself, it was a three-headed monster and the relationships between these three

lives was not simple or direct – and the Host – which is a complicated real place again. It was the site of a ruined farmhouse in the middle of the forestry plantation which had a history but also it was possible to view it as a metaphor for a whole set of other histories that had taken place in Wales: economic decline, the death of farming, issues of rural suicide, and you don't need to say these things to many members of the audience, they will come with them already culturally 'built-in'.

There will be other members of the audience who will try to see in the work something akin to what they had seen on the stage of a theatre the night before, and they won't see it, they really will not see it. And I don't know what to do about that, because more and more these works became not just site-specific but place- or culture-specific. I don't mean that in a fixed way at all – in other words, if you ring a number of obvious bells, you're somehow saying the right things. We tried to make work which was very speculative, very hybridized, very troubled, very internally inconsistent in all kinds of ways, but that would resonate within a culture which is itself internally inconsistent, very troubled, very fractured, peripheral to Europe and to Britain in all kinds of ways. You stop creating objects and you start creating fields. And I think an audience responds to a field of materials arranged poetically very differently to the way in which it responds to objects. It often comes away from these works not knowing why it's been moved by what it's seen. And I think that's phenomenally exciting.

That's perhaps why the three-part model that you described is important, particularly when each part of that model is itself active and in many parts (for instance, the ghost is a field rather than an object), because the suggestion is that there are a number of different permutations which could happen on any one occasion.

Absolutely, and if you do the same performance on three nights, if you have different audiences, the event will be different. And I don't mean in some kind of atmospheric sense – you know, like every performance is different on the stage of a theatre – I mean structurally different. A group of students from north Wales came to see *Tri Bywyd* and they brought a whole other reading to the piece which I'd never imagined. The nature of the engagement was different depending on what people brought with them. Now, my guess is that that's true in most pieces of theatre to some extent, but it's rampant in this kind of theatre.

Another thing that I think perhaps complicates the model of site-specificity is the fact that a number of Brith Gof performances, particularly the earlier ones that you mentioned (for instance, Haeearn), have been presented in more than one place, and I'm interested in what this process of touring or re-locating does to the concept of specificity. What is it that is toured?

I think in the early pieces, those first three big pieces where there was this hand-in-glove relationship, it was largely a case of redesigning physically, re-ordering the geography of the performance. The first piece that we made, *Gododdin*, was performed first of all in Cardiff, then it went to Italy. Now in Cardiff it was performed in the old Rover car factory, in Italy it was performed outdoors in a sand quarry, in Hamburg in an old crane factory, in Frisland in an ice-hockey stadium, and then in Glasgow in an old tram repair workshop. Now, because it was hand-in-glove it was fairly easy – I don't mean it was a simple affair, but I went to each of these places and re-conceived how the piece would work there, how the audience would enter, how the audience would move around, how the performers would work the place and so on. The one in Italy was astonishing, just a remarkable piece of work. In Cardiff in November or December in this old factory we had rain during the show so the performers almost suffered from hypothermia; but when we did it in Italy in the summer it was entirely different, and all the performers were bronzed and beautiful. There are some photographs from that performance which look like Renaissance paintings. Then we did it in Hamburg and it was very different again, because the audience came along and saw this piece which had lots of drumming by Test Dept, performers with naked torsos, fire, and it was all very reminiscent of the Nazi rallies in the 30s to them, so they were very concerned. So this is a piece which when touring – in as much as you can tour a site-specific work – takes on an entirely different kind of atmosphere wherever you're doing it. But still what the performers did was exactly the same, the soundtrack was exactly the same, so in a sense it was the host and it was the witness that changed in those particular instances. And it absolutely altered the nature of the work. As far as I could, I tried to respond scenographically to sites which were different, but the meaning of the work was altered by things we could only schematically control or address.

If you take a piece like *Tri Bywyd*, you simply cannot tour it. We did another piece called *Lla'th* (*Gwynfyd*) – *Lla'th* means milk, *Gwynfyd* means paradise or perfection or white space or... it's an idea which refers to heaven in a way – we did that piece entirely site-specifically within the rooms of a disused farmhouse and the yard and buildings of the farm. We worked together three bodies of

material, one of which was a detailed account of a farmer being killed by his bull – a real event that took place back in the 50s which the performer had been told about by her mother, so there was a strong element of her personally carrying this story. The next one was Jesus Christ's passion – we used Bach's St Matthew Passion within the show and the fourteen stations of the cross, which are the Roman Catholic narrative of Christ's crucifixion (Jesus is condemned to death, Jesus picks up his cross, Jesus falls for the first time, and so on) were overlaid onto this farmhouse, so you had one real geography and this other entirely artificial and alien geography laid over the top of it. And then the third body of materials that we wanted to work with was Yuri Gagarin's first orbital flight around the Earth. Now, we managed to make something happen at that place – because of the Host, because of the Ghost, because of the Witness – which was so much more than the sum of its parts. It was an astonishing piece of work and I can't really explain why. But after we'd made this work we decided to make from it a piece of work that we could tour to very small venues – in other words, it wouldn't be site-specific – and we made a touring small scale show on a table top with the audience seated around the table, and it was performed in all kinds of places around Europe. But there was no way that you could imagine the site-specific version through that touring version. We were also invited to make a site-specific version of the work in Denmark and we went there and we found a farmhouse. In the performance in Wales we'd used a number of local women, so we tried to find some local women in Denmark, and we made a copy of the Welsh production, with simultaneous translation of the Welsh script into Danish played over headphones. I guess what we set up was a field but I'm less familiar with the culture there; there is a strange non-tradition of these kinds of things in rural areas in Denmark – whilst there's a very strong tradition in Wales. I realized that the culture in Wales is very particular, people who come to see our shows are local farmers, bus drivers, and it's perfectly natural to come and sit down and watch a piece of work which most people would call avant-garde or experimental – because it's in their language and it's resonating in complex ways within their culture. So when we did this thing in Denmark some people thought it was incredible, some people were incredibly moved, but I think a lot of people were nonplussed. Because the cultural topsoil was different. The Host, in as much as it wasn't just a building, had to be a culture. The accident with the bull, and lots of references within the piece to things which had gone wrong in rural life – foot and mouth disease, mad cow disease, all of these things that rural communities are endlessly plagued with – didn't make any sense to these people in Denmark because Danish farmers are wealthy, their rural economy is buoyant and so on. So that's a way in which the Host stopped the other two components from working, or the Host and the Witness were less activated than back in Wales. The Ghost that we'd made – which resonated incredibly in the first staging – couldn't find the cultural sound boxes against which to resonate in this new place. So personally, I think that genuinely site-specific work – site-specific work which approaches the nature of camouflage – is almost impossible to reproduce anywhere else. Almost impossible. And I think that's very challenging; in other words, does an arts council, or a company that has to live in the real world, do those kinds of works or not? It's a genuine predicament. I came to the conclusion that you could probably do something which was vaguely touring but which would just look like any other theatre show really, because in a sense what you do is you remove any notion of the Host and the Witness, and you compound those down into one thing which is as much like the audience going to the conventional theatre as it could be – so, I don't think I would want to do that again. What I'm interested in doing is making symphonic, complex 'field' based pieces of work which somehow implicate themselves in what's already there in the place.

I know that also you've made pieces for television, which I think is interesting in the context of this conversation. I'm wondering if the terminology of site-specific performance might in some way be useful here. We're getting into notions of definition, of how the site might be defined. Where is the site in the TV work? Is it made for the site of the screen or the site of reception, which itself has this cultural topsoil that you mentioned?

We came at television through a strange convoluted route. When you do work like this, you get television companies calling: "Oh, could we do an item about the show on the arts programme?". And so they come along and take over a whole day of your precious rehearsal time and they go away and do what they want with your material – usually it's ok and useful as a part of publicizing the work or something like that, but sometimes it's not ok, sometimes, by squeezing this complex thing through the television format, something comes out at the end which I'm nervous of. But generally speaking we allow people to do it and just hope that they do a decent job. The next step up from that is that somebody asked to do a documentary programme about the *Gododdin* project, which involved recording materials of us rehearsing and in meetings as well as the actual performances. And at that point I started to consider how many people were going to see this television programme? It might be in tens or hundreds of thousands, maybe millions. The number of people who actually see the live show is way less than that. So where should we be focusing? I started seriously to conceive of doing a

piece of live work which would, in its format and in its detail and in its lighting, for instance, be such that it would look wonderful on television. That's a scary thing to do for somebody who's concerned about live theatre, but I thought we had to think about these things. So *Haearn* was made specifically as a live show but it had cameras on cranes build into the scenography that were recording materials for an eventual television programme that I would also be co-directing. Now, I won't go into the nightmare of what that means conceptually, but part of that deal was that I would be able to have control over how our work was appearing on television. I think television is abominable at presenting live performance to us. What television normally does is break things down into their components, shoot them in their components and then reassemble them within a television architecture. What I was asking them to do was to shoot the thing 'live' and 'on the fly' and hope that they could assemble it later.

So there are four stages: one, a crew comes along and shoots an item; then a crew comes along and makes a documentary about your work; then you try to work out a way of making the work itself a document of itself for television; the next stage is to make a piece of work which has no live theatre component, which tries seriously to engage with the television medium in its own terms. And we've done all of those. The only one that I really trust is the last one. And so I did make maybe three pieces of work for television where I tried to work with the television medium itself - the architecture of this strange little box in the corner of people's living rooms. Because it's entirely intimate. The heroic scale of *Haearn* - live, at points, looks almost Wagnerian - but it looks ridiculous when it ends up on a television screen. Television deals best and is happiest with small, intimate, light, fluid things. That's a big challenge to people who make live large scale theatre in real and large architectures, I think.

I always used to think when television came into our world and colonized it that I should go back into the television world and colonize that! And that's what I tried to do: to try to make the television world take up a shape which is more appropriate to my world. And to some extent it worked, and to some extent people were excited by it. But I don't know how far you could go with that, because the templates within the television world are horrifically limited and pre-set. I think that notion of trying to make the television-makers adjust their positions around this new idea of a work was one of the components of my project, and another was to try to work out how one can deal with quite serious ideas on a television screen without ending up relying on the structures that hold television together: the narrative and the documentary. But there were other things appearing at the time, things like music videos and video diaries - these are formats which were quite new and I started to think about ways in which you could work intimately and so I made one piece of work eventually which just dealt with a single figure in a room, and the architecture of the room, and the movement of the camera, and memories and what happens to this woman in this room - and that was much more successful. So I do regard those works as 'colonizing the colonizers', to some extent. But the hybrid model of the Host, the Ghost and the Witness in the live site specific work is out of the window when you have something on a television screen, and I don't yet know - I don't understand enough about the structures and architectures - what would be the equivalent architecture for a radical and extended work for television - although I'm working on some ideas!

Shifting slightly, but I think on a related area, I know that you've been involved in the processes of documentation. There's a whole set of issues, obviously, when you start to document site-specific work, and we've been talking a lot about this model that you've developed of host, ghost and witness. What are you documenting when you start to document work?

Heaven knows! I suppose I basically adopt an attitude that there is no such thing as a document. It's actually a second, or a third order work. I think if you adopt that principle then the question that you have to ask of the second order work is: what is its duty vis-à-vis the first order work? And that's negotiable. You have to start thinking about why it is that you're documenting this thing.

For instance, Nick Kaye asked me to document a piece of work for his book *Site-Specific Art*. And I kind of knew what his general thesis was, and in a sense what he wanted was not quite an illustration of that thesis but something that would sit within that kind of intellectual trajectory. So I tried to be respectful of that for him, but everything else I did was an attempt to break out of the restrictions of that medium - in other words, the book - in the same way that I tried to make myself awkward within the restrictions of the television screen. And I tried to do that in a number of ways...

I think what you'll probably find is that, of the people associated with a project, whilst they might all agree and be persuaded by the performance and its 'event-ness', when it comes to a question of recording it or documenting it, everybody will have different needs. The Arts Council of Wales will

want it to be documented in a certain way, I as the director might want it to be documented in a way which gives rise to a further engagement with the ideas, the performers might want it to be documented in an entirely different way, the people who own the site might want something else – there is no consensus. Someone who worked on the *Tri Bywyd* project with me, when he saw that documentation that I did in Nick Kaye's book, was surprised at the way in which I'd done it because he believes that documentation should not be done on paper. In other words he believes it's possible as a performer to make second and third order performance works which are documentations of the first one. And indeed he's does several of them and that's very interesting and exciting, but there comes a time when somebody says 'we want this in a book', 'we want this on a television screen' or 'we want it to go on this shelf which will remain the prime archive of this work for the next fifty years'. I don't know how to get to that point, without making a second order document of first order performance. The question you've got to address sooner or later is: how do you get the thing onto paper? The issue doesn't go away when you make a second order performance - you simply put the problem off for a while – but it will come back and haunt you eventually until you find a method of representation in a medium that is not the medium of the original work. The way in which I specifically tried to address it within Nick Kaye's book was to problematize this sense that the book is the authoritative 'final word'. There are a number of problems with trying to get a piece of work like *Tri Bywyd* onto the pages of a book. One is that the page-by-page turning of the book is a very particular act, you know, it's kind of like moving through time but not quite, as opposed to something like this [indicates a document from his current 'deep mapping' project in the Netherlands], which is a kind of like a codex, a forty foot long... [laughs, & then, for the tape...] I'm folding out a piece of paper here.

But this is how you suggested that the documentation should be read.

That's right, I'm very interested in the codex. Early bindings of books and religious texts allowed you to either open the text page by page or, if the occasion allowed, to actually open the thing up as a long fold-out 'concertina'. Now, I liked the possibility that my pages in Nick's book could be converted by the person who owned the book into the 'real' document. In other words, when we have academic books we often go away and photocopy them and use them in our essays or whatever. I thought it would be very exciting if that act of photocopying really was an act of authorship, in a way, and so I invited people first of all to photocopy all of those pages and to paste them together into one continuous document: then would be revealed the 'real' or 'authentic' documentation that I had wanted to make. So the documentation *doesn't exist in the book*. Also, because of the page size – which is very limited, it's A5 or something – I suggested that the reader should enlarge them to 200%, which I think makes a page about A3. So I think you have twelve A3 pages. Once again that's closer to the documentation I wanted; the original text in the book is almost impossible to read because it's a 5 point text; when it's blown up to 200% it becomes 11 point or something. And a final thing was the black-and-white-ness of the book; I suggested that the reader, having done all of that, could colour in the pages. It's all quite light-hearted but it is an implicit critique or exposure of the 'machinations' of the book format. I wanted the documentation suddenly to drop out of the book somehow. All of these templates worry me: the template of the television programme, the template of the theatre show on the stage, the template of the book. Those formats are so restrictive to an artist, I think, that you immediately want your work to sit uncomfortably within them. And I don't want to do it in an aggressive way. Rather than induce 'trauma' I wanted to be kind of 'erotic' ... I don't mean in a sexual way, but in terms of a seduction: to try to seduce the reader into a different engagement with the document. Therefore one has to ask: in Nick's book, where is the document? What is the document? When do you actually hold the document in your hand? Is it there when you buy the book, or is it only there when you've finished all of this photocopying and you've coloured the thing in – do you then have the document? Strangely, that document will, I think, feel as though it has much less status than the original thing in the book, because that's printed and there are many thousands of copies available of it. This one is your own one – you, the reader, made it. So I think then the notions of authenticity, of documentation and of authorship are opened up in a lively way.

Absolutely, and I think what happens, when you read that documentation without going off and making a photocopy, is that your attention is automatically drawn to how you've read the rest of the book up to that stage and how your eyes move around a page – all of these different things... the page-turning that you've talked about: you suddenly become aware of this because you're trying to picture these pages being laid out in a line.

I did also think at one point of putting a postscript at the end: 'P.S. if anybody would like to send me their photocopied and coloured-in versions over the next year, I will give a prize to the best one', but I thought that I was maybe being a bit too trite for Nick's serious book! However, I've been talking with

publishers recently about trying to document the company's move from what we first called site-specific, which is this Shakespeare in the park, through to these kinds of works and into television and into publishing. The culturized, politicized, dynamic, hybridized things that these kinds of works give rise to are very difficult to document; they require very precise intellectual work, I think, to be able to pull them apart and talk about them. And what I'd like to do is to publish a book about those ten years' worth of works in some kind of large-format way, which genuinely does try to deal with the issues and which is not just a series of pictures of shows. Over the ten years I've put together a very thorough archive and I think I could probably do something really exciting, but documentation is a genuine problem.

You've spoken about your journey of the last ten years through different understandings of site-specificity. I want to turn to this last year when you've been working in California on the Three Landscapes Project. Have your working methods and your notion of site-specificity been altered through the process of working in California?

I guess so. When we did *Tri Bywyd*, I then decided that this was so exciting to me that I wanted to produce a suite of works in rural west Wales - which were put together under the heading of *ProsiectEcs*. My idea was to make a series of works which grew from the experience of making *Tri Bywyd*: pieces of work in rural locations which were highly radical but which sought to engage with issues, concerns and cultural resonances of the people who lived in those places and would probably come to see the thing. And we made five or six pieces of work which were never seen outside of west Wales. At some point I got to know the archaeologist Mike Shanks at the University of Wales in Lampeter, and he suggested to me that what these pieces of work were doing was 'documenting' their locations. With all of the techniques that he has available - Ordnance Survey maps, archaeological site reports and so on - he suddenly saw that what we were doing by introducing people, narratives and personal histories into these places created a very exciting model which could be turned to the representation of places. But performance puts together media which actually have built into them a kind of a pretence and which endlessly suggest to you that you should suspend your disbelief, so I've been quite unsure how that sits comfortably with any scholarly representation of that place and I think there's a tension in that for me. However, I was persuaded enough to think: well, maybe there is something in this, and so Mike and I have been working together on the *Three Landscapes Project* in Stanford University in California, where I have been a Senior Research Fellow for the past year. *The Three Landscapes Project* is an attempt to work out ways of understanding and of representing place, and the peoples or events of those places, through technologies of mediation and technologies of site. I've moved the performer, temporarily, out of the equation to see what it might mean to activate the other components of the symphonic 'field' model. So I've been working in media entirely different to live performance: I've been doing a lot more with graphics, with models of mapping, with journals and journeys, with aerial photography and so on - with my two colleagues. The three landscapes that we dealt with were: a landscape in west Wales called Hafod, which is a picturesque landscape; a landscape in Sicily where Mike Shanks was doing an archaeological dig; and the third landscape, which I've been trying to tackle, is the San Andreas fault in California. We wanted to try to come at these three subjects from three different points of view and three different disciplines: from me as an artist, from Mike as an archaeologist, and the third person that we brought in is an expert on Welsh notions of place and spirituality.

I worked on the San Andreas fault, and what became immediately exposed, as I tried to approach this landscape and what it means, was my position as an outsider: very quickly I had to deal with the fact that I wasn't Californian, I'd come from somewhere else. What was the cultural baggage I was carrying with me? What memories was I carrying with me? What kinds of techniques - conceptually, emotionally, aesthetically - would I bring to bear on this landscape? And I guess at the end of the year I find myself in a position of believing that it's possible to represent place by the use of a group of techniques which I can only call 'deep mapping'. Now, deep mapping can include any medium, any format, it can end up as any kind of engagement with an audience and it could well be a performance. Indeed I am persuaded, after a year, that *Tri Bywyd* was a deep mapping of its particular location. But deep mapping is not to be confused with other notions of mapping which are about arriving at a consensus - instead, it's about proliferating representations around sites, I think. Another project that I'm working on at the moment, which is on an island off the northern part of the Netherlands, is the first practical example of what it might be to deep map an island. And it's tortuously complicated, because those issues that I introduced earlier about cultural responsibility, where in a rural location you simply can't do what you want to do, are even more intense when you start seriously seeking ways of representing places, events and peoples. So I've gone even further down that road, I guess, and at the moment I'm not quite sure where it's going to go - I guess there's another five years' work in this

process! I'm also trying to bring together issues to do with media formats. Whatever you do in site-specific works people will still come knowing that there's an implicit contract between the performer and the audience: that this man wielding this oil drum is not going to smash me over the head with it, you know; that I am safe – I might be implicated emotionally and I might have to move around but I needn't be afraid. That kind of contract, which arises from the notion of theatre and pretence, might not be present in other media.

I can now conceive of making performance works with no live audience but still a genuine hour-long live performance, with a performer in a forest, which is being broadcast live onto a website or a television channel, and I can also get excited about maybe three or four different modes of engagement that people might have with those things. And it might be less to do with technology than with whether one interfaces with the work as an individual, as one does when one is reading a book or sitting at a computer screen. In other words, the personal interface of the audience member is really what defines that engagement. Then the next mode of engagement might be watching TV with family and friends. The next one might be in a semi-public place like a lecture theatre or a workplace. And then the last one might be fully in the public arena. If we think about modes of engagement rather than what we used to call media, it might be that that's a more sensible way of cutting through the whole way in which people come at pieces of work. And it might be that there's more similarity between a public exhibition or an installation and a public performance than there is between live performance and that performance on television – because the architecture of engagement is entirely different. So that's where I'm at, at the moment. When I start making live theatre again I don't know what this is all going to mean, other than that I'm inclined to work across a range of media. *Tri Bywyd* was a performance, but I think these days I would be more inclined to hold off and maybe spend some time raising some money and negotiating some deals – so it's a television piece, it's a performance, it's a publication, it's a website, it's a multimedia installation, you know. That really scares but excites me.

And the fact that a work might then exist in a number of different formats itself raises questions of site and engagement with place.

Absolutely so. I think there's a big question these days in how people are engaging with artworks. How often do you actually stand in front of the work, in the same place and time as it? And how often do you see it in illustration or written about in an article? One of my favourite directors is a director whose work I've never seen – that's Robert Wilson. I've seen endless illustrations, I've read endless interviews, I've seen videos, but I've never actually sat in an audience in front of one of his pieces of work. I'm very interested in that reality and I think that this way of working across media is actually more truthful and more in line with the way in which we all come across things. But at the same time I also have this love of and respect of standing in front of the work in real time and real space – and I don't know where I stand on that. I think the real world demands that we make the real work but we've also got to accept that it's going to exist in other mediated formats. And we might as well learn about those and get to grips with all of these engagements with an audience, from the public performance through to the website. Now, that's a very different architecture – it doesn't feel like the way things used to be, to me. But what about you? You're a young person – this must feel as though the world's decomposing and being put together in other ways somehow?

I guess what it means for me is that I'm beginning to write about performance now and I'm having to deal with an expanded notion of the term, because of the dissemination of performance in a number of formats. It means that there is a whole set of theories now about performance in real life – and where the boundaries might be drawn – and I guess what I'm having to negotiate now is the idea of what, then, is a performance and what isn't?

I know. As a maker of work, you absolutely have to answer these questions, because what do you do next? What's the next project? I think the way in which the audience is zapping between media is very restructuring and I don't know how to respond to it as the maker of the work. It's very easy to respond cynically. I think that's the worst problem: I know that, because an audience coming in to see a piece of my work will have seen this, this and this on TV, if I present to them highly polished and professional video images on screen they will be seduced. I know if I present highly sophisticated high quality CD recordings coming over a good PA they will be seduced. I know how to do that, and it's very easy to do it, but that basically means that you're adopting an aesthetic which is coming from another medium. Because live theatre has not really ever been about those things – it's 'liveness', its 'here-and-nowness' and its potential for disaster or bliss have been one of its prime characteristics.

I think, though, that's where performance can be surprising because, in carrying out the seduction that you mentioned, it can play with the familiar media that the audience might be used to and then insert something of the live performance into that, making the audience question it. And perhaps that's only happening for 300 people, as opposed to the 3 million who could watch it on television, but it's still a questioning...

Oh sure, it's something I love, don't misunderstand me. But it's interesting to introduce the technologies of documentation back into the work. I did a lecture for somebody once called 'I am here on false pretences' and one of the things I say in the lecture, regarding this question of documentation, is that, even at the time of the event, I don't think I could even simply describe what's actually happening. And I think that this predicament endlessly undermines the possibility for the record or the document, but it does also return us to the notion of the prime authenticity of the live event as being somehow the essential and central 'holy grail' of it all, and I really object to that! So the idea of moving these technologies back into the work, for me, proliferates the so-called authenticities within live performance in ways which are very exciting. With good performers you can generate a hybridized and discontinuous but very seductive experience, I think, for the audience. In other words, you don't have to go down the comforting and reassuring 'hi-tech gloss' route – if you're very careful you can work with these media in ways that give rise to a more complicated relationship between the Host, the Ghost and the Witness – a new kind of live 'architecture' for the theatre work.

David Wheeler interview – 15 February 2002

FW: I wonder if you could begin by talking about your own performance background, in terms of the personal path that's led you to work with IOU.

DW: Well, I came to it rather sideways, because I originally did sculpture at college. I did some installation work in which I was a character within the piece, and then working with another theatre company I suddenly found myself not just a maker but a performer. And so I've come to it from that route rather than a theatre background.

Do you think the sculptural angle is still affecting how you view performance in the context of theatre?

Yes, because IOU rarely uses dialogue – usually any words come through song or through monologue. And I guess that allows the words to work in a sculptural way, along with all the objects and machinery and various bits and pieces that we have in a show. So the whole thing tends to work sculpturally rather than narratively, I should think. Though the shows do end up with a narrative, but we don't have that as a starting point. Ideas tend to begin it: a visual idea rather than a literary or narrative idea, though gradually those come into it. They become as important, but they're not usually the starting point.

And do the sites that you use operate in a sculptural way within the work?

Yes. Usually the idea for a theme will start with an image or a landscape – or the concept of a landscape – and that probably comes before we actually find a site. So whatever is obsessing us at a particular time then finds its context in a landscape or a building or whatever and we begin to find ways of combining the feel and the sculptural sense of the site – combining with the ideas that are current at that particular time.

What are the types of place that interest you in terms of creating work, when you start to look for the 'context' that you've spoken about?

Probably there's more interest when the sites are slightly ambiguous, so they are sculptural rather than having a very definite identity which you then have to work either with or against, one way or another. For instance, the last big site-specific show we in fact did here, which, considering we've been here since '84, is the first time we've actually done a site-specific here. We used the viaduct – it's called the Viaduct Theatre but actually it's just a big open space with some seats in it. And that's underneath the building so it's quite catacomb-like, with ramps down into the area. But you can't quite work out what it is or what the shape is, so you can then project ideas onto that landscape and the reality of the space... it's definitely a real space; from the audience's point of view it's not a set, there's something real about it. But you can also project other ideas into it, and I suppose that's probably the richest combination for us. I mean, we have worked in churches or perhaps 'cleaner' buildings, or buildings which are theatres but which we've used in a site-specific way, but you're having to very much work with or against something which has an identity that people have to get over before they get to what we're doing.

So you prefer the site not to be over-determined in the first place, in order that you can interpret it in a range of ways rather than merely polar ways?

Yes. I mean, it's good if the sites have a lot of atmosphere, which the viaduct space, for instance, has: you can't quite place what the atmosphere is, just that it's not altogether pleasant! So it gives richer possibilities, I think.

That particular show that you've just mentioned – Cure – then moved to Manchester, which is where I saw it. I'm intrigued because Bim Mason, in his book about street theatre, quotes from an old IOU text: "The main difference with a show devised for a specific site rather than one devised to tour, is that the physical characteristics of the space condition the narrative, structurally and in content". So it's deliberately setting up the site-specific show against the touring show. And then you get Cure, which kind of tries to occupy both categories, and I wonder what your experience of that was.

There isn't a definite theory that we've got about making site-specific works. The way the context comes up will be different every time we do it. Sometimes a show will be more site-specific than others, if you like. So with the Manchester one, we'd already explored and developed a lot of ideas

here – a lot of the ideas came up, I guess, because of the particular nature of this venue. Then you realize that you've got a chance to do it again in another venue which is quite different, and you can then take the best aspects of what you did here and build on it in the next environment. And so you can pick up on other possibilities in that space. So actually the two shows were very different, and I was very pleased with the Manchester one because, in a way, though a lot of the ideas happened before we got there, the space, I think, worked quite well. It was such a big space and we could use these polythene walls, and because you could go out of the building and back in in different ways we could in some ways... not deliberately confuse the audience, but the spectators weren't ever quite sure where they were in the overall shape of things. So when you came across the same space the next time it had changed somehow. So I enjoyed that development on the show. That seemed to be in keeping with the theme.

Creating a labyrinth...

Yes: endless corridors, and a more clinical feel to it. It was very different from here; this was sort of dripping arched walls and things. I think what happened here was that there was a sense of... well, there were one or two comments which made us think 'that wasn't the point'. If we mean anything, it wasn't that. Because people started to think: well, maybe this is some sort of comment on the National Health system – you know, the crumbling aspect of it, which is too precise an idea compared to what we wanted. We weren't making a political statement – however relevant it might be! That wasn't what we set out to do. So the sense of white walls leading from the wedding tent into the field hospital tent or whatever, made more interesting and more ambiguous links, which I think helped it to stay ambiguous and more potentially interpretable by the individuals, rather than suddenly getting locked into the idea of having to interpret everything as being linked to a comment on the health service or whatever. So if you take the same ideas in one landscape (or building-scape) and put them into another, then you realize that it sets up a whole new set of resonances and possibilities in people's minds. It's always interesting when you carry ideas from one location to another.

Will that happen again with Cure?

We'd like to do it again, it's just phenomenally expensive to put on. If we can ever afford to do it again it would be great, but we haven't got plans at the moment.

I know you haven't always worked exclusively in urban environments. Do you respond fundamentally differently to urban and rural locations?

I don't know. That probably answers the question: probably 'no' is the answer. I mean, I think being based here in West Yorkshire (in the Halifax area, which has a very particular character in itself) has probably influenced us quite a lot, in the sense that it is a very unusual mixture of sort of moorland landscape – wild, uninhabited landscape – semi-inhabited areas, and then very industrial pockets. You only have to go five minutes and you're out in the wild, so I think that combination of us living in what 20-odd years ago was very a run-down industrial area mixed with stunningly beautiful countryside means that we straddle two concepts quite subconsciously, I guess. I think we take the same impetus to all locations, because it's already a combined notion within us.

So perhaps given IOU's context, a stark contrast that's usually set up between the urban and the rural doesn't really apply any more?

Possibly, or it's possibly there all the time. The contrast is something which we deal with all the time, so I think probably in a sense if we're in an urban landscape we'll try to bring something of the contrast of a rural, pastoral context, and vice versa.

IOU creates work in a number of categories. I'm particularly interested in the street theatre angle, and the ways in which street theatre is both similar to and different from site-specific work. For you, what is the relationship between those two categories of your work?

Well, they're very different. I would say that the street work is probably more linked in a sense to the theatre work in its form, because it has to exist as quite a self-sufficient concept: it has to be strong in itself no matter what situation you put it in, in the same way that touring theatre has to have its own identity, in spite of traffic going past or people doing their shopping or whatever. Usually the audience is more likely to be a passing audience, unlike the site-specific work where people have a theatre concept when they come to see it (in the sense that they're coming to a particular location to probably

pay some money to either sit or stand and watch something that they expect to be an hour or an hour and a half). Now, those concepts are very different to the street theatre – people that perhaps don't know any theatre see you. But I think you'd always know it was IOU whether it was in any of those categories that we work in. Probably the style and imagery and content is consistent throughout, it's just they have to be built in a slightly different way for each context.

Do you know who your audiences are for the different categories? You hinted there that you might be getting a different audience for your street theatre than for your site-specific work.

Yes, there's quite a small following of IOU people who follow us round and will come and see us no matter what we're doing, and they'll look forward to us doing the bigger site-specific work. The street work – you'll get the same people coming to see our street work but then you inevitably draw people who are just out shopping and have never heard of us. And some of those will be interested enough to try to find out more about us and maybe come and see us in other contexts.

So in your street work you're almost setting up two levels of audience, and you don't find that happening to the same extent in the site-specific work?

It depends. The site-specific work, because it's usually hard to set up and more expensive, happens much more rarely, and it's usually linked to a festival or something like that so you're more likely to get the festival audience and an audience which is attracted through that. You'll get new people who know about the festival and may not have heard of IOU but are interested in what it sounds like so they come and see us. And you also get the IOU regulars who will know that we're at a particular festival.

Moving back to the Bim Mason quote, he cites IOU saying: "In a site-specific show, the relationship between theatre and 'reality' is changed. There may be a clear 'edge' - sometimes danger". That's something that fascinates me – this idea of the relationship between theatre and reality that alters somehow. How does that work for you, and where does this danger come from?

It is the thing which is probably most exciting about site-specific work: the blurring of the edge between reality and artifice. So that I think as an audience you aren't absolutely sure of what is intentional and what is a mistake or what is reality impinging on that. An example: we were doing a site-specific show in a canal basin in Coventry some years ago and the audience was seated facing an embankment which had tunnels into it. In one of the scenes a car draws in in front of the audience towing a caravan, but because of the strangeness of the space some of them couldn't quite work out whether it was just a holiday maker who happened to drive straight into the set! So there's always that slight tension; there's a danger of rogue public suddenly crashing into the scene. And also just being able to see beyond where we're actually working, so you'll see a skyline and all the traffic in the distance, all adds to the feel of whatever it is that we're doing. There's that collision of the real and the unreal.

Do you find yourself almost working towards the rogue encounter, preparing yourself for the possibilities that might occur within each site?

I suppose so. We're also terrified of it as well! Losing control doesn't feel that good, because it could also ruin it completely. So you try to control the random possibilities within a structure. Just the way you position the seating so you're not going to be confronted by the local lads shouting over the fence – because that's just a distraction, it doesn't help at all. So we're trying to find ways of introducing reality without it being a distraction from what we're doing.

You're starting to become interested in cyberspace, creating a digi-version of Cure and looking at other ways of using cyberspace as an environment. Does the idea of site-specificity still hold any relevance for this work? I'm interested in how the ideas of the site-specific work might affect how you start to work with cyberspace.

Probably not. I noticed that Chris Squire from Impossible Theatre – who works with us, actually – put it quite well in the survey. Cyberspace doesn't have an intrinsic atmosphere of its own, so really it's another way of representing something which has happened somewhere else. It has good possibilities as a place where people can interact with the content of a site-specific show. It could develop: you could invent an environment that doesn't really exist to be explored anywhere but cyberspace, but again I suppose that it's more like a black box theatre in the sense that you have to bring everything to it because everyone has to see it through a glass screen, so they don't actually immerse in it. Which is

the nice thing about live, site-specific theatre: it's all around you and the unpredictability of it is something I'm much more interested in.

So the space of the web is more interesting for you in terms of how it might allow you to document work that's already taken place?

That's a definite possibility. The possibilities of creating a 'site' on there is again interesting, but it doesn't have quite the same potential as 'the real thing'.

Both Bim Mason and Alison Oddey have written about IOU as 'building into' a space. What are the criteria for how you begin to 'build in' – for what you import into a space?

In the true sense of the site-specific, that will be what the space suggests could be enhanced within it. We did a show called *The House* in London a long time ago – it was a derelict house and the garden was full of rubble. We flattened the garden and built seating, so as an audience you sat and looked at the back of this house. We basically animated the house, but we built on the side of the house another room which was cut away so you could see inside, and the musicians mainly inhabited that but other action happened in there. So that kind of enhanced the possibilities of that site. In Denmark we did a show which was between disused railway lines and a tree had grown up between the diverging of the tracks. It was a perfect tree, so there was a sort of Garden of Eden feel to it with the entrance of human industry into it. So our work was about enhancing that idea, bringing that out. The railways actually helped us to get the tracks running again and gave us some railway wagons to push up and down the line. Bringing all those elements into the landscape was a very exciting thing to work with. The landscape suggested that whole contrast between the peaceful Garden of Eden feel and trains and industry. But those ideas were already current in our minds anyway, so you begin to bring the ideas and the ideas and site build on each another and gradually you find that you've got some sort of narrative or meaning on the space. That evolves rather than being imposed. Well, we do impose but it is an evolving process of ideas.

So in that particular site the juxtaposition of ideas was already present. You've spoken about enhancing what you find in a site – do you ever deliberately bring something in to juxtapose with what you find there? Or is that not something that interests you in the same way?

Very often what we tend to do is cut across what is the essential atmosphere of the place, to bring a contrast into it is often a useful direction to go in.

Do you think when you cut across an environment that it's always going to be interpreted as a political statement, or are there other ways to begin to interpret that?

No, not really. Usually it isn't a problem – usually we can head that off and it probably over-emphasizes it to mention it as a problem. Here, it was only a couple of comments that I heard which suggested that I might be quite sort of hyper-sensitive to being limited in the potential interpretation of what we're doing. I don't think we're very often accused of working politically in the ideas. Not that there's anything wrong with that: I think in one sense it's fundamentally political, but to be pinned down to one particular idea just wipes any kind of magic out of the work you've done.

So do you think that it's through the 'magic' that's associated with IOU (for example, the very powerful imagery) that you're able to preserve the ambiguity that you're after?

I hope so, yes. We seem to be more successful in that at some times than others.

*You spoke about *The House*, which is one of your very early pieces. Has your approach to site-specificity changed over the years and, if so, how would you define that change?*

It probably really hasn't fundamentally changed. The company has been going 25 years now and it still has an identity which is traceable back to its roots, but it has gone through a number of changes and evolutions. A lot of the original members are still very active in the company, which is perhaps unusual, but for the first ten years we were a group of six people who went round from place to place developing ideas when we got to places, so it was perhaps easier to find the context to create site-specific work during that period. Actually site-specifics are rare now. It was probably easier then to go to a place and very quickly develop ideas for the site; the whole way of working then was less pressured in terms of having to have a title six months before the show. We could arrive basically with

a lorry full of stuff and think what we were going to do when we arrived in a week or so. The way we have to produce work is very different now: we now work with a much bigger pool of people and people come in for more specific roles so these things are more managed. And some people are more inclined to work on some kinds of project rather than others. So the way a site-specific show evolves now is probably slightly different, but just in managerial terms, not in artistic development.

So do you think that the whole funding change – I guess the funding crisis of the 80s – has meant that it's more difficult in a lot of ways now to create site-specific work?

Yes, I think it is. We've found it quite difficult because it takes a long time to make a site-specific show, and we do use a fair number of people in the shows, and that is just very expensive. And if it's potentially not going to have many places where it can be done, that's a huge investment for a small amount of return. It's only the occasional festival that can put that amount of commissioning money into it. It depends also on whether IOU has saved up to invest itself in a show like that. So the circumstances in which those shows can happen are now reduced.

Finally, where is IOU going to go from here? What are your current concerns? What are you working on now?

Well, we do a lot of different things – the different contexts give us some way of keeping going, keeping continuity. Doing *Cure* was the first time we'd done anything site-specific for some years, actually. It took a lot of resources to get there and now we've got to build up to that again. It will take another two or three years for us to get to that point again where we can do another big site-specific show. In the meantime we'll be doing an outdoor theatre show – *Daylight Nightmare* – which we did last year, and we'll tour the *Leech* again, so we'll take those out this summer. We're going to rework *Daylight Nightmare* a bit more. And we're working on a bigger show, called *Tattoo*, for next year, which again is for festivals. The idea is that maybe 2,000 people can see it at a time, but it's a show that we can set up in a couple of days or so. So it will have quite a big impact but isn't financially absurd, unlike *Cure*! During this year and next year we'll be working on a show in the way we built up *Cure*: through lots of small experimental shows where you could develop ideas and let the ideas grow to end up with a show in two or three years' time that has the sort of depth that that development time can give it. So it's about keeping things rolling with ready-made shows and new shows which fulfil a particular brief within a festival – which are also fun to do and keep our profile up for the people who are then forking out for us to do a site-specific show. So it's a matter of balancing all those different pressures.

It's an interesting way of working, to have these small experiments that you can build up over a couple of years and then bring themes from those together into a site-specific work. It's perhaps a way of getting around some of the administrative and financial problems of that sort of work. Have you got the ideas of the themes that you'll be building from?

We've got the starting point. We did an video installation in the autumn at the Tramway in Glasgow called *Eye Witness*. It was five huge cubes and inside there was life-size projection of five different incidents all involving people in some kind of mortal danger. On the roof of one was projected someone hanging from the balcony; in another, there was a projection on the floor where someone was underneath a tiled floor with a grill, and they were under water trying to get out. Another showed someone in a bed which kept on catching fire, and someone kept on opening a door and getting blown across the room, and someone was being abducted in car chase. So there were these separate things going on and there was an explanation of how these people got into these various predicaments. The next site-specific show will probably be called *Providence*, and it will be a development from that idea, where we might use projected life-size images. In our minds at the moment is a sense of how these people got into these situations, and what happens afterwards – will they stay trapped in this endless loop? So it gives us a chance of doing a 'before and after' of these situations. It might be a bit too defined, in a sense – it's got to be broken down from that a little bit, but that's where it's going.

The implications for the spectators in that idea I find interesting. The video installation puts the audience into the position of witness, and, depending on which site you choose for the bigger piece, you might be able to implicate the audience in a number of different ways.

Yes, that was very much in our minds when we thought of *Eye Witness* – because the projections are life-size and you're very close to them, so there is a play with voyeurism and your own helplessness and responsibility. Not that we would say that in any publicity! But it's an interesting thing to play

with. And then that might develop, as you say, in terms of how you implicate the audience in seeing things which might be happening live, or versions of that. It's interesting but also terrifying.

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